


DOSTOEVSKY STUDIES 11



The Journal of the International Dostoevsky Society

Managing Editor · Horst-Jürgen Gerigk

New Series
Volume 11
2 0 0 7

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v. 11
2007

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Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der „Loterie de la Suisse Romande, Genève“

Dostoevsky Studies/New Series is published annually by Narr Francke Attempto Verlag.

Subscription price per year: € 48.- (plus postage). Orders can be placed through your bookseller, or directly at Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, P.O. Box 2560, D-72015 Tübingen, Germany, Fax + 49 / 7071 / 97 97 11, info@narr.de

Unsolicited contributions are welcome. Please send three copies for evaluation to one of the Managing Editors.

Computer typeset: Viktoria Funk und Friederike Appel, Heidelberg
Cover design: Heike Haloschan, Tübingen

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D-72070 Tübingen, Germany

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Printed in Germany on acid-free paper.

ISSN 1013 2309

ISBN 978-3-89308-968-0

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Volume XI, 2007

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The issue is dedicated
to the memory of
Victor Terras
(1921–2006)
member of the Honorary Board
and former Vice-President
of the
International Dostoevsky Society



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ARTICLES ◇ AUFSÄTZE

ULRICH SCHMID

Universität Bochum

Zu russisch oder zu ritterlich? Konzeptionen der Beichte bei Joseph Conrad und Fedor Dostoevskij

Joseph Conrad ließ bei seinen britischen Freunden keine Zweifel an seiner Abneigung gegen Dostoevskij aufkommen: „He is too Russian for me“, schrieb er am 27. Mai 1912 an Edward Garnett, den Ehemann von Constance Garnett, die gerade *Brat'ja Karamazovy* ins Englische übersetzt hatte.¹ Das Adjektiv „russisch“ bezeichnet in diesem Bedeutungskontext eindeutig als Synekdoche jenen abschreckenden Sinnkomplex, der durch die Kultur und die Politik des Zarenreichs gebildet wird. Bereits 1905 hatte Conrad in seinem Aufsatz „Autocracy and War“ den Stab über Russland gebrochen:

An attentive survey of Russia's literature, of her church, of her administration, and the cross currents of her thought, must end in the verdict that the Russia of to-day has not the right to give her voice in a single question touching the future of humanity, because from the very inception of her being the brutal destruction of dignity, of truth, of rectitude, of all that is faithful in human nature has been made the imperative condition of her existence.²

Dostoevskij erscheint aus dieser Sicht als Inkarnation eines ebenso zerstörten wie zerstörerischen Nationalcharakters, der sich selbst aus der europäischen Zivilisationsgemeinschaft exkommuniziert hat.

Was Conrad genau mit seinem Hinweis auf das Übermaß des Russischen meint, wird klarer, wenn man Conrads Sicht auf Dostoevskij mit

¹ Frederick Karl, Laurence Davies (eds.): *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 5. 1912-1916. Cambridge 1996, 70.

² Joseph Conrad: *Autocracy and War*. In: Ders.: *Notes on Life and Letters*. Cambridge 2004, 71-93, 82.

seiner Turgenev-Deutung vergleicht. Conrad stellt selbst in einem Essay aus dem Jahr 1917 den «heiteren» Turgenev dem «verkrampften, von Schrecken gejagten» Dostoevskij gegenüber.³ Auch Turgenev ist für Conrad sehr «russisch», verfügt aber im Gegensatz zu Dostoevskij über eine allgemein menschliche Dimension, die ihn auch für den westlichen Leser goutierbar macht:

Never was a writer so profoundly, so wholesouledly national. But for non-Russian readers, Turgenev's Russia ist but a canvas on which the incomparable artist of humanity lays his colors and his forms in the great light and free air of the world.⁴

Turgenevs Russland bildet also nur den Hintergrund für eine höhere, nationenübergreifende Wahrheit, während Dostoevskijs Handlungsfiguren voll und ganz der russischen Krankheit verfallen sind.

Conrads Antipathie gegen Russland ging so weit, dass er sich weigerte, Russen die Hand zu geben. Als er 1914 unwissentlich eine russische Dame in Zakopane mit einem Handschlag begrüßt hatte, war er später sehr aufgebracht, als er erfuhr, dass er gegen eines seiner Lebensprinzipien verstoßen hatte.⁵

Conrads Abneigung gegen alles Russische ist zweifellos zu einem großen Teil auf seine prekäre Familiengeschichte zurückzuführen. Sein Vater Apollo Korzeniowski hatte 1863 am polnischen Januaraufstand teilgenommen. Nach dem Scheitern wurde er nach Sibirien verbannt, sein Hab und Gut wurde von den russischen Behörden konfisziert. Conrad selbst war zwar als russischer Staatsbürger zur Welt gekommen, in verschiedenen Aussagen setzte er aber die Grenze zwischen dem Westen und Russland keineswegs mit der territorialen Ausdehnung des russischen Reiches gleich, sondern verfocht den Standpunkt, dass Polen eine zutiefst westliche Kultur darstelle. An George T. Keating schrieb er am 14. Dezember 1922:

Racially I belong to a group which has historically a past, with a Western Roman culture derived at first from Italy and then from France; and a rather Southern temperament; an outpost of Westernism with a Roman tradition situated between Slavo-Tartar Byzantine barbarism on one side and the German tribes on the other; resisting both influences desperately and still remaining true to itself to this very day. I went out into the world before I was seventeen, to France and

³ Joseph Conrad: Turgenev (1917). In: Ders.: Notes on Life and Letters. Cambridge 2004, 40-42, 42.

⁴ Ebd., 41.

⁵ Aniela Zagórska: A few reminiscences of Conrad. In: Zdzisław Najder: Conrad under familial eyes. Cambridge 1983, 210-223, 219.

England, and in neither country did I feel myself a stranger for a moment: neither as regards ideas, sentiments or institutions. If he [Der amerikanische Literaturkritiker Henry Louis Mencken, der Conrad in als slavischen Autor bezeichnet hatte, U.S.] means that I have been influenced by so-called Slavonic literature then he is utterly wrong. I suppose he means Russian; but as a matter of fact I never knew Russian. The few novels I have read I have read in translation. Their mentality and their emotionalism have been always repugnant to me, hereditarily and individually. Apart from Polish my youth has been fed on French and English literature. [...] I am a child not of a savage but of a chivalrous tradition and if my mind took a tinge from anything it was from the French romanticism perhaps.⁶

Diese Formulierung ist eine fast wörtliche Wiederholung von Conrads Charakterisierung der polnischen Kultur aus dem autobiographischen Bericht *A Personal Record* (1912):

Nothing is more foreign than what in the literary world is called Slavonism, to the Polish temperament with its tradition of self-government, its chivalrous view of moral restraints and an exaggerated respect for individual rights: not to mention the important fact that the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had received its training from Italy and France and, historically, had always remained, even in religious matters, in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought.⁷

Im selben Atemzug grenzt Conrad auch das soziale Engagement seiner Familie von jenem „mystischen Humanitarismus“ ab, der von „verrückten Nerven oder einem kranken Gewissen“ herrühre. Es liegt auf der Hand, dass Conrad mit dieser Formulierung wiederum Dostoevskijs Position auf- und angreift.

Conrads Russenhass ist allzu plakativ und kann deshalb kaum als sein letztes Wort über Russland gelten. In der Tat finden sich in Conrads Korrespondenz auch differenziertere Aussagen, in denen Conrad seinen polnischen Nationalcharakter nicht vorbehaltlos dem Westen zuschlägt. In einer viel zitierten Briefstelle bezeichnet sich Conrad selbst als «homo duplex»: Er sei zwar in den englischen Kulturkreis eingetreten, diese Tat-

⁶ Laurence Davies, J.H. Stape (eds.): *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 7. 1920-1922. Cambridge 2005, 615 f.

⁷ Joseph Conrad: Author's note. In: Ders.: *A Personal Record*. London, Toronto 1919, xiii. – Interessanterweise insistiert Conrad auf der volksetymologischen diffamierenden Schreibung von Slavonism (statt Slavonism); in der Handschrift des Textes findet sich am Rand das Wort SCLAVONISM in Großbuchstaben wiederholt. Vgl. Christopher Gogwilt: *The Invention of the West. Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford 1995, 135.

sache mache ihn aber noch längst nicht zu einem Engländer.⁸

Ebenfalls in diese Richtung geht eine Bemerkung aus dem Jahr 1898, in dem er gegenüber Aniela Zagorska den „rein slavischen Namen“ (purely Slavonic name) Borys für seinen Sohn rechtfertigt. Im selben Sinne spricht er 1899 von seiner „ultraslavischen Natur“ (ultra-Slav nature), von der er sich nicht befreien könne.⁹

Ebenfalls zu einfach wäre es, Conrads negatives Dostoevskij-Bild aus einem antirussischen Komplex zu erklären, der unter Polen verbreitet war und von Conrad perpetuiert wird. Gewiss lassen sich in Conrads politischer Publizistik zahlreiche Belege für eine solche Deutung finden. Es ist sogar möglich, dass in Conrads eigenem Bewusstsein die russische Unterdrückung Polens eine dominante Stellung einnahm. Ein solcher Ansatz reiht Conrad jedoch unterschiedslos in die klischeehafte Tradition des polnischen Russenhasses ein und verstellt den Blick auf differenziertere Deutungen.

Aufschlussreicher erscheint der Versuch, Conrads Verhältnis zu Dostoevskij und Russland aus seiner Poetik heraus zu deuten. Viele Romane und Erzählungen von Joseph Conrad folgen einem archetypischen Schema. Im Vordergrund steht eine ambitionierte Persönlichkeit, die eine bestimmte Position erlangen will (oft das Kommando über ein Schiff als Kapitän). Im Verlauf der Handlung verstrickt sich der Protagonist in eine schicksalshafte Schuld, die ihm in der Regel von außen zufällt und seinen point d'honneur auf empfindliche Weise verletzt. Der Knoten wird geschürzt; der Held verspürt einen immer stärkeren inneren Druck, seine Verfehlung zu gestehen. An diesem Punkt gabelt sich der archetypische Handlungsverlauf von Conrads narrativen Konstruktionen: Der Held kann seine Schuld in eine Beichte fassen oder aber für sich behalten. Im ersten Fall endet die Erzählung in der Regel tragisch und führt zum Untergang des Helden, im zweiten Fall kann sich der Protagonist behaupten. Exemplarisch kann als Beispiel für die fatalen Folgen eines Geständnisses der Roman *Lord Jim* (1900) genannt werden: Der Seemann Jim bekennt vor Gericht seine Schuld – den verhängnisvollen Sprung von einem sinkenden, mit Pilgern voll beladenen Schiff – und versucht anschließend in rastlosen Reisen durch die ganze Welt seiner öffentlichen Schande zu entkommen. Die Verschwiegenheit des Protagonisten tritt hingegen pro-

⁸ Frederick Karl, Laurence Davies (Hgg.): *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 3. 1903-1907. Cambridge 1988, 89.

⁹ Frederick Karl, Laurence Davies (Hgg.): *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 2. 1898-1902. Cambridge 1986, 24, 230.

minent in der Erzählung „The Secret Sharer“ (1910) auf: Ein frisch ernannter Kapitän nimmt einen Mörder in seine Kabine auf und versteckt ihn vor der Mannschaft. Das Geheimnis bleibt ungelüftet – der Eindringling verlässt das Schiff nach einiger Zeit unerkannt wieder, der Kapitän behält seine Autorität.

Conrads archetypisches Handlungsmuster gleicht bis zur Peripetie sehr genau der Anlage von Dostoevskijs *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. In der Bewertung des Geständnisses unterscheidet sich Conrad indes radikal von Dostoevskij: Conrad gestaltet in seinen Texten die fatalen moralischen Folgen einer Beichte, während bei Dostoevskij die Beichte umgekehrt gerade die Voraussetzung für sittliches Verhalten ist. Auch die Dialektik von Einsamkeit und gesellschaftlicher Existenz wird bei den beiden Autoren konträr gefasst. Bei Dostoevskij führt die nichteingestandene Schuld in die absolute Einsamkeit des Geheimnisses:

Ему показалось, что он как будто ножницами отрезал себя сам от всех и всего в эту минуту.¹⁰

Erst nach dem Geständnis kann Raskol'nikov wieder in die Gemeinschaft der Menschen eintreten. Bei Conrad verhält es sich genau umgekehrt: Razumov begeht seinen Verrat gerade weil er seine erträumte akademische Karriere nicht aufs Spiel setzen will. Er tritt mit seinem Verbrechen in die russische Gesellschaft ein. Umgekehrt katapultiert sich Razumov mit seinem Geständnis nicht nur aus der Liebesbeziehung zu Natalia Haldin, sondern auch aus seinem gesamten sozialen Umfeld: Er wird sowohl von den Genfer Revolutionären als auch von den russischen Behörden gleichsam exkommuniziert. Es ist hier also im Gegensatz zu *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* nicht das Verbrechen, sondern das Geständnis, mit dem sich Razumov „wie mit einer Schere“ von allem, was war, abschneidet.

In einem ersten Entwurf für seinen Roman hatte sich Conrad noch für eine Retardierung der Handlung entschieden und damit die fatalen Folgen der Beichte noch verstärkt: Razumov heiratet Natalia und gesteht seiner Frau den Verrat erst, als das gemeinsame Kind dem gehängten Onkel immer ähnlicher sieht.¹¹

Conrads Abneigung gegenüber Konfessionen, Geständnissen und Beichten verfügt sowohl eine geistesgeschichtliche als auch über eine

¹⁰ F.M. Dostoevskij: *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. Leningrad 1973, 90. (Polnoe sobranie sočinenij 6)

¹¹ Adam Gillon: *Under Western Eyes, Chance, and Victory*. In: Harold Bloom (ed.): *Joseph Conrad*. New York, New Haven, Philadelphia 1986, 131-149, 133. (Modern Critical Views)

psychologische Dimension. Neben Dostoevskij lehnt Conrad auch Rousseau als Verfechter einer rückhaltlosen Offenlegung der eigenen Seele ab. Rousseau propagiert die Befreiung des Menschen in einem gesellschaftlichen Raum, während Conrad auf die Wirkung der inneren Disziplin vertraut, die gerade nicht öffentlich gemacht werden darf. Für Conrad stellt die Beichte eine Aufweichung des Individualitätsprinzips dar: Das Mitwissen der Anderen korrumpiert die Ehre des Einzelnen, die nur der privaten Kontrolle unterworfen sein soll.¹² Ähnliches gilt für Conrads persönliches Verhalten. Als junger Mann hatte er nach einem empfindlichen Geldverlust durch Spekulationen seinen wohlhabenden Onkel angelogen, er habe bei einem Schiffsuntergang alles Hab und Gut verloren und nur sein nacktes Leben retten können. Darauf schickte ihm der Onkel eine bedeutende Summe.¹³ Die dreiste Notlüge stellte Conrads gesellschaftliche Position auf allen Feldern wieder her. In aller Deutlichkeit zeigt sich hier die soziale Funktion des Schweigens: Sowohl der Onkel als auch Conrads Geschäftspartner sind nach dieser Episode von der Ehrenhaftigkeit Conrads überzeugt. Als Ehrenmann bezahlt nur Conrad den hohen Preis des eigenen Schuldbewusstseins. Die Befreiung von dieser Last durch eine Beichte würde aus Conrads Perspektive gleichzeitig auch bedeuten, dass sich der Fehlbare feige aus der Verantwortung für das eigene Tun stiehlt.

Noch kurz vor dem Tod lässt sich diese Einstellung bei Conrad nachweisen: Nachdem sein Sohn Borys 1922 heimlich geheiratet hatte, weihte die Ehefrau ihren Mann erst nach einem Jahr in das *fait accompli* ein. Joseph Conrad reagierte wütend und warf seiner Frau vor, sie hätte das Geheimnis besser für sich behalten sollen:

Why do you tell me that, why don't you keep such news to yourself? I wasn't to know then, why should I know now?¹⁴

Das Thema des Geständnisses spielt eine zentrale Rolle in Conrads Roman *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Bereits die erste Handlungsskizze, die Conrad am 6. Januar 1908 an John Galsworthy schickte, fokussiert auf Razumovs Beichte seines Verrats:

¹² Bertrand Russell: *Portraits from Memory*. London 1956, 82-84. Zdisław Najder: *Conrad and Rousseau: Concepts of Man and Society*. In: In: Ders.: *Conrad in Perspective. Essays on Art and Fidelity*. Cambridge 1997, 139-152

¹³ John Batchelor: *The Life of Joseph Conrad. A Critical Biography*. Oxford, Cambridge, MA 1994, 17.

¹⁴ Jessie Conrad: *Joseph Conrad and his Circle*. London 1935, 255 f.

The Student Razumov (a natural son of a Prince K–) gives up secretly to the police his fellow Student Haldin who seeks refuge in his room after com[m]itting a political crime (supposed to be the murder of de Plehve). First movement in St. Petersburg. (Haldin is hanged of course.)

2nd in Geneva. The Student Razumov meeting abroad the mother and sister of Haldin falls in love with that last, marries her and after a time confesses to her the part he played in the arrest of her brother.¹⁵

Die Anklänge an *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* sind bereits in dieser Kürzestversion unverkennbar: In beiden Romanen steht ein Mord am Anfang der Handlung; die Helden Raskol'nikov und Razumov tragen ähnliche Namen; auch das Geständnis des Verbrechens erfolgt unter den Augen der Geliebten. Relativ spät führte Conrad mit Sophia Antonovna eine weitere Frauengestalt in den Roman ein, die in engem Zusammenhang mit Natalia Haldin steht. Ursprünglich hatte Conrad für diese Figur sogar den Namen Sofia Semenovna vorgesehen – das aber ist Sonjas voller Name aus *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*.¹⁶

Im ausgearbeiteten Text gehen die Parallelen bis in einzelne Formulierungen hinein: Raskol'nikov gesteht Sonja, er habe nicht die alte Pfandleiherin, sondern sich selbst umgebracht; ebenso eröffnet Razumov Natalia, er habe nicht Haldin verraten, sondern sich selbst. Eine zweite intertextuelle Beziehung liegt in Razumovs Feststellung gegenüber Natalia Haldin, er habe niemanden, zu dem er gehen könne – diese Feststellung ist ein Echo auf die Verzweiflung des Säufers Marmeladov, der ebenfalls keinen Ort mehr hat, an den er gehen kann.¹⁷

Under Western Eyes kann durchaus als Fortschreibung einer Reihe von Problemen gedeutet werden, die im Zentrum von Dostoevskijs literarischer Arbeit standen: Die Verantwortung für persönliches Handeln, die moralische Integrität der Persönlichkeit, die Gesellschaftsfähigkeit des schuldbeladenen Individuums und schließlich die sittliche Ökonomie von Verbrechen und Strafe. In allen diesen Punkten zeigt Conrad eine beträchtliche Nähe zu Dostoevskijs Konzeption. Sowohl Raskol'nikov als auch Razumov sind deklassierte vaterlose Intellektuelle, die monomannisch einen bestimmten Lebensplan verfolgen und darüber die sittliche

¹⁵ Frederick Karl, Laurence Davies (eds.): *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 4, 1908-1911. Cambridge 1990, 9.

¹⁶ Keith Carabine: *The Life and the Art. A Study of Conrad's Under Western Eyes*. Amsterdam, Atlanta 1996, 158.

¹⁷ Adam Gillon: *Under Western Eyes, Chance, and Victory*. In: Harold Bloom (ed.): *Joseph Conrad*. New York, New Haven, Philadelphia 1986, 131-149, 134. (Modern Critical Views)

Verantwortung des Menschen vergessen. In beiden Romanen impliziert die Handlungsführung eine Zurechtweisung (nakazanie) des fehlgeleiteten Protagonisten. Unübersehbar sind gleichzeitig die Unterschiede: Dostoevskijs Gedankenexperiment führt in einen utopischen Epilog, in dem Raskol'nikovs Verbrechen als notwendiges Vorspiel einer sittlichen Läuterung dargestellt wird. Bei Conrad hingegen endet das Romangeschehen in der Katastrophe. Razumovs Selbstbestrafung erscheint als sinnlose Geste, die nicht nur sein eigenes, sondern auch Natalia Haldins Leben zerstört.

Conrad hat seine eigenen literarischen Antipathien auch in *Unter Western Eyes* eingebracht: Razumovs Geständnis verweist auf den verderblichen Einfluss von Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Razumov schreibt seine Beichte in Genf auf der Jean-Jacques Rousseau-Insel nieder, buchstäblich unter den Augen des Moralphilosophen. Die Szenerie ist symbolisch stark aufgeladen:

On setting his foot on it Razumov became aware that, except for the woman in charge of the refreshment chalet, he would be alone on the island. There was something of naive, odious, and inane simplicity about that unfrequented tiny crumb of earth named after Jean Jacques Rousseau. Something pretentious and shabby, too. He asked for a glass of milk, which he drank standing, at one draught (nothing but tea had passed his lips since the morning), and was going away with a weary, lagging step when a thought stopped him short. He had found precisely what he needed. If solitude could ever be secured in the open air in the middle of a town, he would have it there on this absurd island, together with the faculty of watching the only approach.

[...] he pulled out of his pocket a fountain pen, opened a small notebook on his knee, and began to write quickly, raising his eyes now and then at the connecting arm of the bridge. These glances were needless; the people crossing over in the distance seemed unwilling even to look at the islet where the exiled effigy of the author of the "Social Contract" sat enthroned above the bowed head of Razumov in the sombre immobility of bronze.¹⁸

Der Ort des Geständnisses ist einsam und öffentlich zugleich: Mitten in der Stadt zieht sich Razumov auf eine Insel zurück. Seine Beichte erfolgt unter dem Denkmal eines äußerst negativ konnotierten Autors, der nicht nur den „Gesellschaftsvertrag“, sondern vor allem die skandalträchtigen *Confessions* geschrieben hatte. Es liegt nahe, die Abwertung des Ortes als Enallagè nicht auf die Insel, sondern auf Rousseau zu beziehen: „Verhasst“, „präventiös“ und „schäbig“ ist der Genfer Philosoph selbst, das

¹⁸ Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. London, Toronto 1923, 290 f.

berühmte Vorbild von Razumovs fataler Offenlegung der eigenen Seele. Aufrichtigkeit erscheint aus dieser Perspektive als fatale Selbsttäuschung, mehr noch: als Motor für eine prekäre Selbstinszenierung, in der noch die peinlichsten Verfehlungen des Ich einem Publizitätsgewinn dienstbar gemacht werden.

Dem falschen Beichtideal Rousseaus steht bei Conrad der ritterliche Ehrbegriff gegenüber. Das Ich konstituiert sich nicht mehr als Protagonist eines Narrativs, der seinen Wahrheitsanspruch aus der Ausweitung des Sagbaren hinter die Grenzen der Scham bezieht, sondern als Held in einem biographischen Text, in der das tatsächlich Erzählte gerade nur eine Teilmenge des Sagbaren ausmacht.

Conrad verwendet beträchtliche literarische Energie darauf, Razumovs Geständnis als freiwillige, gerade nicht von den Umständen erzwungene Handlung darzustellen. Darin gleicht er Dostoevskij, der Raskol'nikov ebenfalls nicht in einem Indizienprozess überführen lässt. Auch Raskol'nikov profitiert von einer Verkettung günstiger Umstände, die es dem Ermittler verunmöglichen, ihm seine Tat nachzuweisen. Die Parallele lässt sich sogar noch weiterführen: In beiden Fällen wird ein Vertreter der Polizei zum Eingeweihten der verbrecherischen Tat des Protagonisten. Porfirij Petrovičs Gespräche mit Raskol'nikov werden deutlich wieder aufgenommen in den Dialogen zwischen Geheimrat Mikulin und Razumov. Schließlich ist auf das gemeinsame Motiv des vermeintlichen Täters hinzuweisen: In *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* taucht ein Mann auf, der den Mord an der Pfandleiherin und ihrer Schwester gesteht, in *Under Western Eyes* kommt der Figur des Ziemianitch, der vor seinem Selbstmord den Verrat an Haldin auf sich nimmt, eine ähnliche Funktion zu. Natürlich hat man es hier zusätzlich auch mit einer Kontamination zu tun: Das Motiv des Selbstmörders, der eine fremde Schuld auf sich nimmt, tritt bei Dostoevskij am prominentesten in der Figur des Kirillov aus *Besy* auf.

Besonders interessant sind in Razumovs Beichte stilistische Anspielungen auf Dostoevskij, die allerdings nicht mehr in der Endredaktion vorhanden sind. Im ursprünglichen Romanentwurf charakterisiert der alte Sprachlehrer Razumovs Schreibstil mit Worten, die auch auf Dostoevskij angewendet werden könnten:

All the fluctuations of his feelings and the perplexities of his spirit in short all the profound trouble of his existence is set down with a terrible minuteness of

self examination interspersed with a terrible minuteness of self examination interspersed with long speculative passages in a declaratory style.¹⁹

Damit wird deutlich: Dostoevskij stellt den zentralen Ausgangspunkt der Poetik von Conrads *Under Western Eyes* dar. Allerdings dürfen diese intertextuellen Beziehungen nicht vorschnell auf ein kontrastives oder gar satirisches Verhältnis reduziert werden. Eine solch simplifizierende Betrachtungsweise verbietet sich allein schon durch die vielfach verspiegelte Erzählperspektive, die eine fixe ideologische Position des Autors ausschließt.

Gleichwohl ist kaum übersehbar, dass Conrad in *Under Western Eyes* ein sehr persönliches, ja sogar intimes Problem gestaltet hat. Berühmt geworden ist der Bericht von Conrads Ehefrau über Conrads Nervenzusammenbruch nach der Fertigstellung des Romans: Der Autor sprach im Fieber auf Polnisch mit seinen fiktiven Figuren.²⁰

Es liegt mithin nahe, den ganzen Roman als Ersatzhandlung für eine fehlende Beichte des Autors Conrad zu betrachten. Die spezifische Leistung von *Under Western Eyes* müsste dabei darin bestehen, dass der Text für den Autor den Stellenwert einer Konfession einnimmt, ohne für den Leser als solche erkennbar zu sein. Bereits in „A Personal Record“ hatte Conrad für literarische Werke genau diesen Status in Anspruch genommen:

[...] I know that a novelist lives in his works. He stands there, the only reality in an invented world, amongst imaginary things, happenings, and people. Writing about them, he is only writing about himself. But the disclosure is not complete. He remains to a certain extent a figure behind the veil; a suspected rather than a seen presence – a movement and a voice behind the draperies of fiction.²¹

Es ist darauf hingewiesen worden, dass Razumov als unehelicher Sohn des Fürsten K... die Initialen KK trägt – ebenso wie Joseph Conrad, dessen polnischer Name Konrad Korzeniowski lautet.²² Die Transformation

¹⁹ Zit. nach: Keith Carabine: *The Life and the Art. A Study of Conrad's Under Western Eyes*. Amsterdam, Atlanta 1996, 113.

²⁰ Stephen Ross: *Conrad and Empire*. Columbia, London 2004, 173. John Batchelor: *The Life of Joseph Conrad. A Critical Biography*. Oxford, Cambridge, MA 1994, 172.

²¹ Joseph Conrad: *A Personal Record*. London, Toronto 1919, 8 f.

²² David R. Smith: *The Hidden Narrative. The K in Conrad*. In: Ders. (Hg.): *Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes. Beginnings, Revisions, Final Forms. Five Essays*. Hamden 1991, 39-82, 42.

von K zu C in einem westlichen Kontext wird auch im Roman selbst thematisiert. Der Protagonist wird bereits im ersten Satz als „Cyril son of Isidor – Kirylo Sidorovitch – Razumov“ eingeführt.

Die Initiale K spielt im Roman *Under Western Eyes* eine besondere Rolle. Das Manuskript des Romans, das in der Beinecke Library der Yale University aufbewahrt wird, ist vor allem im letzten Teil mit sorgfältig gezeichneten K übersät.²³ Die einzelnen K sind wie Indices am Rand aufgeführt. Die Vermutung liegt nahe, dass Conrad mit diesen K eine besondere Relevanz bestimmter Stellen signalisiert. In der Tat spielt das Motiv des Geständnisses bei vielen der durch K markierten Passagen eine herausragende Rolle.

Im Zentrum des letzten Teils steht Razumovs Geständnis vor Natalia, er sei es gewesen, der ihren Bruder an den Galgen gebracht habe.²⁴ Diese Beichte ist im Manuskript von K gesäumt. Damit wird deutlich: Conrad schreibt hier als Konrad. Anders formuliert: Das K markiert das Überhandnehmen des russischen Elements im Text.

Diese Besonderheit lässt sich ebenfalls bei anderen, ähnlichen Motiven beobachten. Durch K hervorgehoben wird etwa auch folgende Digression des Erzählers über die Biographie des Geheimrats Mikulin, der wegen eines Skandals von einem Gericht verurteilt wird:

And in the stir of vaguely seen monstrosities, in that momentary, mysterious disturbance of muddy waters, Councillor Mikulin went under, dignified, with only a calm, emphatic protest of his innocence – nothing more. No disclosures damaging to a harassed autocracy, complete fidelity to the secrets of the miserable arcana imperii deposited in his patriotic breast, a display of bureaucratic stoicism in a Russian official's ineradicable, almost sublime contempt for truth; stoicism of silence understood only by the very few of the initiated, and not without a certain cynical grandeur of self-sacrifice on the part of a sybarite.²⁵

Das Nichtgestehen wird hier zwar in einem deutlich ironischen Ton präsentiert, gleichwohl erhält Mikulin hier die Würde des Schweigenden, der sich auch noch im Unrecht aufzuopfern weiss. Deutlich ist jedenfalls die starke russische Imprägnierung der Passage.

Ähnliches gilt für das Mikrosujet um den Studenten Kostia, der von Razumov angestiftet wird, seinen eigenen Vater zu bestehlen. Razumov handelt ebenso eigennützig wie niederträchtig: Er braucht die Beute, um

²³ Ms Vault Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. Beinecke Library, Yale.

²⁴ Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. London, Toronto 1923, 354.

²⁵ Ebd., 305 f.

das Vertrauen der Revolutionäre zu erschleichen. Auch diese schändliche Episode, die an das Verhältnis zwischen Vater und Sohn Verchovenskij in Dostoevskijs *Besy* erinnert, wird mit einem K markiert.²⁶

Das K verweist also auf ein Dilemma, das sowohl über eine ethische als auch eine ethnische Dimension verfügt. Letztlich rekurriert Conrad hier auf eine Denkfigur aus der polnischen Romantik, die gleichzeitig auch zu einer Handlungsfigur geworden ist. «Konrad» steht für die prekäre Zerrissenheit des romantischen Individuums, das gleichzeitig dem absoluten Imperativ der Moral und den Anforderungen eines ungeliebten Staats zu genügen hat.

Die literarische Gestaltung der Konrad-Figur geht auf Adam Mickiewicz zurück. Im Zentrum des Poems «Konrad Wallenrod» von 1828 steht ein Litauer, der als Kind von Deutschen erzogen wurde und es bis zum Großmeister des Deutschritterordens gebracht hat. Während einer entscheidenden Schlacht gegen die Litauer führt Konrad Wallenrod durch sein Verhalten eine Niederlage für die Deutschritter herbei – aus der Sicht der Deutschen ist er ein Verräter, aus der Sicht der Litauer ein Held. Die Nicht-Identität der Konradfigur wird wieder aufgenommen im dritten Teil von Mickiewiczs Versdrama *Dziady*, in dem aus dem byronistischen Helden Gustaw in einer Wiedergeburtsszene der engagierte Nationalheld Konrad wird.

Mickiewicz ist – wie Dostoevskij – auf vielfältige Weise bei Conrad präsent. In einem Interview aus dem Jahr 1914 hebt Conrad die Wichtigkeit von «Konrad Wallenrod» explizit hervor.²⁷ Auf Kryptozitate aus *Dziady* hat Gustaw Herling-Grudziński bereits 1957 hingewiesen.²⁸ Russland wird in *Under Western Eyes* als „monströses weißes Blatt“ der Menschheitsgeschichte präsentiert:

Under the sumptuous immensity of the sky, the snow covered the endless forests, the frozen rivers, the plains of an immense country, obliterating the landmarks, the accidents of the ground, levelling everything under its uniform whiteness, like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history.²⁹

²⁶ Ebd., 313.

²⁷ Zdzisław Najer: Introduction. In: Ders. (ed.): Conrad's Polish Background. Letters to and from Polish Friends. London, New York, Toronto 1964, 1-31, 9.

²⁸ Gustaw Herling-Grudziński: W oczach Conrada. In: Ders.: Godzina cieni. Eseje. Warszawa 1997, 78-101, 83. (Pisma zebrane 8)

²⁹ Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. London, Toronto 1923, 33.

Bereits Mickiewicz hatte Russland mit derselben herablassenden Metaphorik beschrieben: „Kraina pusta, biała i otwarta / Jak zgotowana do pisanja karta.“ Die sinnlose Endlosigkeit der Landschaft spiegelt sich in den leeren Gesichtern der Russen. Mickiewicz's Denunziation („Twarz każdego jest jak ich kraina / Pusta, otwarta i dzika równina.“) wird von Conrad bei der Beschreibung des emigrierten Revolutionärs Peter Ivanovitch wiederholt:

He had one of those bearded Russian faces without shape, a mere appearance of flesh and hair with not a single feature having any sort of character. His eyes being hidden by the dark glasses there was an utter absence of all expression.³⁰

In *Under Western Eyes* besteht auch eine deutliche intertextuelle Beziehung zu „Konrad Wallenrod“. Zunächst sind beide Werke eng über das Thema des Verrats miteinander verbunden. Auffällig ist überdies eine Namensähnlichkeit. Bisher wurde in der Forschung kaum davon Notiz genommen, dass Bruder und Schwester Haldin über einen höchst unrußischen Familiennamen verfügen: Der Konsonant „H“ existiert überhaupt nicht im Russischen; und auch die Lautfolge „al“ müsste in einem rein russischen Namen die Lautung „olo“ aufweisen. Gleichzeitig erinnert der Name „Haldin“ aber deutlich an „Aldona“, Konrad Wallenrods Geliebte, die sich nach Konrads Tod in einem Turm als Nonne eingeschlossen hat. Durch diese Parallele wird deutlich, dass zwischen Razumov und Haldin eine enge Bindung besteht, die in „Konrad Wallenrod“ als Liebesbeziehung gefasst wird. Die Beziehung zwischen den beiden Männern wird allerdings noch durch einen weiteren Intertext überlagert: Victor Haldins schicksalshafter Besuch bei Razumov gleicht strukturell stark der Erzählung „The Secret Sharer“, die während der Arbeit an *Under Western Eyes* entstanden ist. In beiden Fällen wird die Hauptfigur von einem Doppelgänger heimgesucht, der allerdings keine erschreckende, sondern eher eine erotische Wirkung ausübt. Haldins Ausstrahlung wiederholt sich in der Attraktion, die seine Schwester Natalie auf Razumov ausübt.

Allerdings muss auch im Verhältnis zwischen Mickiewicz und Conrad auf einen entscheidenden Unterschied aufmerksam gemacht werden. Während die disqualifizierenden Aussagen über Russland bei Mickiewicz aus dem Mund des autoritativ sprechenden Erzählers kommen, stammen die entsprechenden Stellen aus dem Bericht des englischen Sprachlehrers,

³⁰ Ebd., 120.

der eine scharfe Trennlinie zwischen dem aufgeklärten Westen und dem barbarischen Russland zieht.

Tony Tanner und Eloise Knapp Hay haben gezeigt, dass die Perspektive dieses vorgeschobenen Erzählers keinesfalls mit Conrads eigener Position gleichgesetzt werden darf.³¹ Conrad selbst hielt es 1920 für nötig, seinem Roman ein Vorwort beizufügen, in dem er auf die besondere poetologische Rolle des Sprachlehrers hinwies:

He was useful to me and therefore I think that he must be useful to the reader both in the way of comment and by the part he plays in the development of the story.³²

Durch die Brechung der Romanhandlung im Bewusstseinsprisma des Sprachlehrers kompliziert sich die antirussische Ideologie des Romans. Die Ausfälle gegen das barbarische Russland stammen aus dem beschränkten Horizont des Sprachlehrers und können keineswegs als absolut gesetzte Wahrheit innerhalb der Romanfiktion gedeutet werden.

Conrad hatte sich bereits am 20. Oktober 1911 in einem Brief an Edward Garnett gegen den Vorwurf gewehrt, *Under Western Eyes* sei ein russophobes Pamphlet:

There's just about as much or as little hatred in this book as in the *Outcast of the Islands* for instance. Subjects lay about for anybody to pick up. I have picked up this one. I have picked up this one. And that's all there is to it. I don't expect you will believe me. You are so russianised my dear that you don't know the truth when you see it – unless it smells of cabbage-soup when it at once secures your profoundest respect. [...] It is possible that You haven't seen that in this book I am concerned with nothing but ideas, to the exclusion of everything else, with no *arrière pensée* of any kind.³³

Noch im Vorwort von 1920 präzisierte Conrad seine Absicht, Russland «unparteiisch» zu analysieren:

³¹ Eloise Knapp Hay: *Under Western Eyes* and the Missing Center. In: David R. Smith (Hg.): Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. Beginnings, Revisions, Final Forms. Five Essays. Hamden 1991, 121-154. Eloise Knapp Hay: Reconstructing „East“ and „West“ in Conrad's Eyes. In: Keith Carabine, Owen Knowles, Wiesław Krajka: Contexts for Conrad. 2 Bde. Boulder, Lublin, New York 1993, II, 21-40, 32. Tony Tanner: Nightmare and Complacency. Razumov and the Western Eye. In: *Critical Quarterly* 3 (1962), 197-214.

³² Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. London, Toronto 1923, ix.

³³ Joseph Conrad: *Collected Letters*. Volume 4, 1908-1911. Cambridge 1990, 488 f.

My greatest anxiety was in being able to strike and sustain the note of scrupulous impartiality. The obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily, by the peculiar experience of race and family [...].³⁴

Under Western Eyes ist in der Tat nicht als Anklage gegen Russland zu lesen, sondern als Kritik am simplifizierenden Blick des Westens auf Russland. Genau dies ist die Funktion des vorgeschobenen Erzählers, aus dessen Perspektive Razumovs Tragödie geschildert wird. Der alte Engländer, der in Russland geboren wurde und in Genf lebt, wird von Conrad zu einem unzuverlässigen Erzähler mit durchschaubaren Vorurteilen stilisiert.

Entsprechende Hinweise finden sich auch im Redeverhalten der einzelnen Figuren. Russland und der Westen sind in der Conrads Konstruktion nicht von einer Demarkationslinie getrennte Territorien, sondern stellen vielmehr ein Mischverhältnis dar, das bei einzelnen Charakteren in unterschiedlichen Proportionen auftreten kann. Bei ihrer ersten Begegnung bezeichnet Haldin Razumov zweimal als leidenschaftslosen „Engländer“. Aber auch Natalia Haldin verfügt neben ihren russischen Zügen über eine politische Haltung, die von Conrad durchaus dem Westen zugeordnet wird. Ihre Aussage „I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch at a piece of bread“ wurde von Conrad sogar in den prominenten Rang des Epigraphs erhoben.³⁵ Natalia Haldins verzweifelte Sehnsucht nach Freiheit ist eine polnische Haltung, die im 19. Jahrhundert zu mehreren Aufständen geführt hatte. Natalia Haldin – die im Roman eindeutig als Russin kodiert ist – weist damit eine prominente westliche, näherhin polnische Komponente auf.

Es zeigt sich also, dass die strenge Dichotomie Russland-Westen von der Textarchitektur immer wieder unterlaufen wird. Dasselbe gilt für Dostoevskijs Präsenz in Conrads Roman: *Under Western Eyes* stellt nur auf den ersten Blick eine satirische Umkehrung von Dostoevskijs ästhetischen und ideologischen Entwürfen dar. Viel angemessener ist eine Deutung, in der das Motiv der Beichte in den Vordergrund gestellt wird. Erst dann wird erkennbar, dass Conrad seine intertextuellen Anspielungen für ein komplexes Problem einsetzt, das auch Dostoevskij umgetrieben hat.

Dostoevskij und Conrad gehen beide von der anthropologischen Prämisse aus, dass der Mensch sich unweigerlich in Schuld verstrickt. Die menschliche Freiheit besteht also gerade nicht darin, die Schuld zu ver-

³⁴ Joseph Conrad: *Under Western Eyes*. London, Toronto 1923, viii.

³⁵ Ebd., 135.

meiden, sondern mit der Schuld auf angemessene Weise umzugehen.

Schuld ist für Dostoevskij und Conrad zunächst immer private, sogar intime Schuld, die ein persönliches Geheimnis darstellt. Literaturhistorisch gesprochen gibt es bei Conrad für Dostoevskijs Problem zwei Lösungen, die mit den Namen Rousseau und Mickiewicz verbunden sind.

Die Lösung, die auf Rousseau zurückgeht, besteht im Geständnis. Dadurch wird Schuld zwar nicht entschuldigt, aber aus einer konkreten individuellen Situation heraus verständlich gemacht. Gerade diese öffentliche Erklärung von privater Schuld ist aber für Conrad inakzeptabel. Individuelle Ehre und eingestandene Schuld sind für Conrad unvereinbar. Ehre setzt für Conrad nachgerade die Isolation des Individuums von der öffentlichen Meinung voraus. Exemplarisch gestaltet hat Conrad dieses Motiv in der Erzählung „Prince Roman“ (1911), in der ein Held des Aufstandes von 1863 seine ritterliche Standfestigkeit beweist. Bezeichnenderweise ist der Protagonist dieser Erzählung taub – er kann sich also schon aus physiologischen Gründen nicht von der Gesellschaft beeinflussen lassen.

Die zweite Lösung verweist auf Mickiewicz. Auch Mickiewicz hat immer wieder in seinen literarischen Werken das Problem des ehrenvollen Verhaltens gestaltet. Im Zentrum von Mickiewicz' Aufmerksamkeit steht die Spannung zwischen öffentlicher Wahrnehmbarkeit und individueller Verantwortung. Mickiewicz will dabei nicht die privaten Beweggründe für ein bestimmtes Verhalten erklären. Ihm geht es um die Nichtidentität des Helden, die allerdings nicht psychologisch, sondern dramatisch aufgeschlüsselt wird. Deshalb sind Mickiewicz' Protagonisten kaum je als Menschen überzeugend, sondern nur als ideologisches Moment in einer Plotkonstellation. Genau diese Spezifik findet man auch bei Conrad. Auch Conrad betreibt keine psychologische Introspektion, sondern zeigt die Innenwelt seiner Helden nur indirekt durch ihr Verhalten in einer bestimmten Situation.

Das Spezifische an *Under Western Eyes* liegt nun darin, dass Conrad Mickiewicz' Grundproblematik mit einer kulturellen Kodierung überlagert. Razumov wird durch zahlreiche intertextuelle Anspielungen auf Dostoevskij als Inkarnation des russischen Elements charakterisiert. Razumovs Tragödie liegt nicht so sehr in seinem Verrat als vielmehr in seiner fehlenden Ritterlichkeit: Er verfügt nicht über die Standfestigkeit, seinen moralischen Fehler für sich zu behalten. Allerdings wäre Razumovs Dilemma durch konsequentes Schweigen nicht gelöst: Er hätte als Natalias Ehemann nicht gleichzeitig der Mörder ihres Bruders sein können.

Wenn man nun Razumovs Dilemma auf eine höhere Stufe hebt, zeigt sich die autobiographische Relevanz der Romanhandlung von *Under Western Eyes*. Joseph Conrad stammt aus einer Nationalkultur, in der ein Schriftsteller zu einem selbstlosen und konsequenten Engagement für die polnische Sache aufgerufen war. Dieser Forderung ordnete sich die gesamte polnische Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts unter.

Joseph Conrad entzog sich diesem ästhetischen Imperativ in einem doppeltem Sinn: Er bediente sich des Englischen und wich in seinen Werken der polnischen Problematik aus. Gerade diese Besonderheiten seines Schaffens führten zu einem ungewöhnlich scharfen Protest in seiner Heimat: Die einflussreiche Schriftstellerin Eliza Orzeszkowa griff in ihrem Essay „Die Emigration des Talents (Emigracja zdolności)“ (1899) Joseph Conrad an und warf ihm vor, sein mögliches Engagement als polnischer Autor dem persönlichen Erfolg in der englischsprachigen Weltliteratur geopfert zu haben.

In diesem Zusammenhang gewinnt der Romantitel *Under Western Eyes* eine zusätzliche Bedeutungsdimension. Joseph Conrad weist hier implizit darauf hin, dass sich sein eigenes Schaffen nicht nur „under Polish eyes“, sondern vor allem „under Western eyes“ vollzieht. Conrad erweist sich mithin als ein neuer Konrad Wallenrod, der zwar vordergründig die polnische Literatur verraten hat, aber bei näherem Hinsehen als polnischer Autor in der englischsprachigen Weltliteratur eine prominente Position eingenommen hat und gerade dadurch seiner Heimat einen größeren Dienst erwiesen hat, als er dies jemals innerhalb der engen Grenzen der polnischen Nationalliteratur vermocht hätte.

Aus dieser Perspektive wird der Roman *Under Western Eyes* als eine Pseudobeichte des polnisch-englischen Autors Konrad Korzeniowski lesbar. Joseph Conrad manövriert seinen Text gewissermassen zwischen Rousseau und Mickiewicz hindurch – seine eigene Gestalt zeigt sich hinter dem Schleier der Romanhandlung kurz und verschwindet gleich wieder. Conrad ist ebenso ein Slave wie Razumov, er verrät wie Razumov aus Gründen der persönlichen Karriere seine Nationalliteratur und er versucht später wie Razumov, die Anerkennung genau jener Kreise zu gewinnen, aus denen er sich durch seinen Verrat selbst entfernt hat. Allerdings kann dieses Unterfangen in beiden Fällen nicht gelingen: Razumov scheitert in Genf an Rousseau, Conrad scheitert in England an Mickiewicz. *Under Western Eyes* ist in diesem Sinne auch eine Parabel auf das

Dilemma des englischen Schriftstellers Conrad, der die Geschichte seiner nicht geglückten Wiederannäherung an die polnische Literatur schildert.

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Print Culture and Real Life in Dostoevsky's *Demons*

Dostoevsky was among the first Russian authors for whom it became possible to make a living solely by writing.¹ Thus it makes sense not only that he was acutely aware of the ways in which printed texts were shaping society, but also that he saw words as acts: as he wrote in 1861, "The word, the word is a great deed!"² This is a sentiment that would certainly have been shared by Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov. In fact, in this conviction (word = deed) as in his life-long commitment to professional journalism, Dostoevsky had perhaps more in common with certain of his ideological opponents than he had with some of the other great novelists of the era, not a few of whom, like Tolstoy and at times Turgenev, had the means and the inclination to remove themselves from the journalistic fray.³ This paper will focus chiefly on the representation of print culture in *Demons*, with some attention to *Crime and Punishment* and brief comparative forays into works by Gogol and Tolstoy. I use the term "print culture" here as a short-hand way of referring to the complex web of social and economic relations that arise in societies where large numbers of texts are distributed among a broad reading public (and "text" for my purposes refers simply and narrowly to words on paper). This discussion

¹ See William Mills Todd, III, "Dostoevskii as a Professional Writer," in W. J. Leatherbarrow, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University press, 2002), 66-92; and Konstantine Klioutchkine, "The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media," *Slavic Review*, vol. 61, no. 1 (spring 2002), 91.

² "Slovo,—slovo velikoe delo!" F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1974), 19: 109 (from an article in *Vremia* written in response to Katkov's journalism in *Russkii vestnik*). All Dostoevsky citations are from this edition.

³ Charles A. Moser, "Dostoevsky and the Aesthetics of Journalism," *Dostoevsky Studies* (Volume 3, 1982), 29, 28.

aims to illuminate how networks of print and the discourses that they create constituted for Dostoevsky the *real world*—a fact most clearly reflected in *Demons*, in which printed texts might be described as the medium in which characters live, the air they breathe.

Midway through *Crime and Punishment* we learn that Raskolnikov, half a year before the moment when the narrative opened, wrote an article entitled "On Crime" and sent it off to a journal. Months later the article was published, but without Raskolnikov's knowledge and in a different journal—where it was then read attentively by the man who would soon be Raskolnikov's interrogator, Porfiry Petrovich.⁴ Clearly, Raskolnikov's text took on a life of its own once he sent it out into the world. It is instructive to compare this plot development with Tolstoy's account, in *Anna Karenina*, of what it means to print and disseminate a text. Here Levin's half-brother Koznyshev labors for six years on a political-philosophical treatise that he expects will "make a serious impression on society [*obshchestvo*]." The book's publication, however, is met with "absolute indifference," its appearance going virtually unacknowledged except for a single spiteful and petty review.⁵ The reception of Koznyshev's book reads almost like a direct refutation of *Crime and Punishment's* insistence on print culture's real-world effects: in *Crime and Punishment*, printed words change everything (after all, ideas disseminated in print play a significant role in turning Dostoevsky's main character into a murderer); in *Anna Karenina*, printed words fall into a void.

Nonetheless Tolstoy has Koznyshev persist in his belief—or his delusion, as Tolstoy would have it—that printed words are in effect deeds. Refusing to recognize what Tolstoy clearly represents as the fundamental unreality of what we call print culture, Koznyshev consoles himself for his own book's failure to change the world by focusing on what he repeatedly claims is the "public opinion" (*obshchestvennoe mnenie*) manifesting itself *in print* in response to the Serbo-Turkish war.⁶ When Koznyshev asserts that "the soul of the nation has found expression [*narodnaia dusha poluchila vyrazhenie*]" in response to the war, the evidence he adduces comes chiefly from printed texts: "the unanimous and complete expression of public opinion is a service rendered by the press ... Twenty years ago we would have been silent, but now the voice of the Russian people is

⁴ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6: 198.

⁵ L. N. Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), 2: 286-287.

⁶ Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, 2: 288, 319, etc.

heard [*slyshen golos russkogo naroda*]."⁷ Tolstoy works to expose the untenability of Koznyshev's view so as to debunk the very phenomenon of "public opinion" as something expressible in print.⁸ Quite characteristically, he is anything but subtle in this debunking effort. Besides depicting the war volunteers as a drunken mob, he has Levin meditate on how ridiculous it is to believe that "a dozen or so people ... and the newspapers express the will and the thought of the people."⁹

Much of *Anna Karenina*'s final section is devoted to undermining certain beliefs that are, I believe, implicitly affirmed by Dostoevsky in *Demons*—most notably the assumption of an equivalence, or at least the possibility of an equivalence, between "the press," "public opinion," and "the soul of the nation." Of course I do not mean to suggest that these passages in *Anna Karenina* were written explicitly in response to *Demons*, but rather that the two texts reflect with particular clarity the deep differences between the two writers' responses to print culture. It is a truism that Dostoevsky's fiction derives from the journalistic writing of his age, and *Demons*, more than any of his other novels, is a text "ripped from the headlines," a work that could not be any more deeply implicated in contemporary print culture. The book's origins lie partly in Dostoevsky's reading of early newspaper reports of the Nechaev affair, the murder of a Moscow student in November 1869 by political terrorists.¹⁰ The writing of *Demons* largely predated detailed press accounts of the infamous crime, but once these accounts appeared in the papers—in July of 1871, after about half the novel had already been serialized—Dostoevsky declared himself well pleased with his success at having imagined the kind of person who would be capable of such a crime.

Thus *Demons* is a product of the environment in which Dostoevsky lived his entire working life, a world where printed texts are part of a vast system of exchange that encompasses and passes around both ideas and money. Dostoevsky never opted out of this system, and the professionalism of his conduct within its institutions seems to suggest that he would

⁷ Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, 2: 288, 319.

⁸ For a concise discussion of the meanings of "public opinion" in late imperial Russia see Marcus C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1-17.

⁹ Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*, 2: 320.

¹⁰ See Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 12: 192-218 for a thorough account of how the writer made use of the press while composing *Demons*. At this time Dostoevsky was living in Dresden, but he followed the Russian press almost obsessively. *Demons* was serialized in *The Russian Herald* from January 1871 through December 1872 before being published as a book in 1873.

not have wanted to even if it had been economically possible for him to do so: he was thoroughly involved in the professional networks of print culture not just because he had no Yasnaya Polyana to retire to, but because of his belief that "the word is also *action*."¹¹

Throughout *Demons*, ideologized words and printed texts circulate not just freely but wildly. We read constant references to pamphlets and tracts, to various newspapers, periodicals, works of literature, books by German positivists, publications smuggled in from abroad, and on and on and on. The provincial governor is an aficionado of political pamphlets, having amassed "his own private collection of all possible kinds of tracts [*proklamatsii*], Russian and foreign, which he had been carefully collecting since the year 'fifty-nine."¹² Another character describes how he "spread various papers in stairways, left them by the dozens in doorways, behind bellpulls, stuffed them in in place of newspapers, brought them to the theater, tucked them into hats, slipped them into pockets."¹³ In such passages printed texts resemble circulating contagions, germs that are always in the air and seeking new hosts—an image that resonates with the novel's Biblical epigraph, the story of the Gadarene swine (Luke 8:32-36). By prefacing his novel with the story of Jesus expelling demons from a possessed man and driving them into a herd of pigs (and by repeating the reference, rather heavy-handedly, in the book's final section), Dostoevsky reinforces the point that his characters are possessed, or infected, by ideas.¹⁴

At one point the spread of political texts is explicitly equated—indeed, almost conflated—with the spread of cholera. Dostoevsky's narrator gives a characteristically semi-garbled and semi-reliable account of events.¹⁵ He begins with a discussion of the "tracts" (*proklamatsii*) recently discovered in the area, pointing out that they were "exactly the same ones, it would later be said, that had not long ago been spread about in Kh— province." He then goes on to note the tracts' appearance in a local factory, a development that in turn gives rise to rumors, rumors that are then "passed on with ... variations as far as the newspapers in the capital [*stolichnye gazety*]." Having already switched from tracts to ru-

¹¹ "Slovo—ta zhe deiatel'nost'." Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 18: 66 (in *Vremia*, 1861), emphasis mine.

¹² Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 245.

¹³ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 212.

¹⁴ For the recapitulation of this Biblical passage at the end of the novel see Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 498-499.

¹⁵ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 269-270.

mors to newspapers (all of them circulating), the narrator then shifts without any hesitation to cholera, an infection which—like the dangerous printed material—is said to come from the factory or perhaps from "neighboring provinces." The cholera, of course, generates still more rumors, and the cycle promises to continue.

Thus does the narrator of *Demons* move seamlessly between dangerous texts, dangerous rumors, and dangerous germs. If one were to judge the whole novel on the basis of passages like this one, one might conclude that Dostoevsky is representing all of print culture as *contagion*, thereby implying that we would be better off quarantining ourselves from the printed word. In support of such a reading one might recall certain other Dostoevsky texts. In the epilogue to *Crime and Punishment*, for example, Raskolnikov dreams that a terrible "pestilence" (*morovaia iazva*) attacks the world's whole population, "infecting" people with the conviction that their ideas are infallible, while in the story "Dream of a Ridiculous Man," a character who calls himself a *sovremennyi russkii progressist*—that is, a creature of texts—"infects" an unfallen world "like a foul trichina."¹⁶ And the fact that in both these passages the contagion is designated as *trikhina*, a parasite that typically affects not only humans but also pigs, suggests a link to *Demons'* Gadarene swine epigraph.

Certainly Dostoevsky would not have been the first to make this kind of case against print culture. Gogol for one, who is Dostoevsky's ideological precursor in many important ways, represents the proliferation of printed texts (which he associates with Europe and modernity) as a kind of disease, both symptom and cause of chaos and cultural decline. In *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* (1847), for example, Gogol describes the products of print culture as "convulsive, sick creations" (8: 238). In the *povest'* "Rome" (1842), the image of Paris serves to drive home Gogol's view of the print epidemic and its noxious effects. In a city described as "a numberless mixed crowd of gold letters, climbing on walls, on windows, on rooftops and even on chimneys," with "posters thronging everywhere, striking the eye by the millions," printed texts have displaced real life: "reading the enormous pages of [Parisian]

¹⁶ The passage in *Crime and Punishment* reads as follows: "There appeared some kind of new trichinae, microscopic creatures that implanted themselves in people's bodies. ... People who were infected immediately became possessed [*besnovaty*e: cf. *Besy*] and out of their minds. ... Never, never before had people considered themselves to be so wise or so unshakable in the truth as those who were infected. Never had they considered their own judgments, their scientific deductions, or their moral convictions and beliefs to be so infallible." Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6: 419. In "Dream of a Ridiculous Man" see Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 25: 113, 115.

journals consumed the whole day and left no time for practical life." At last Gogol sums up print culture as "the terrifying reign of words in the place of deeds."¹⁷

Because Dostoevsky's views of Europe (as expressed, for example, in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*) have much in common with Gogol's, one might expect that Dostoevsky would share at least some of Gogol's distaste for the "promiscuous" production and circulation of printed matter that was associated with the west. But in fact a reading of *Demons* as a whole does not support the argument that the narrative equates printed matter with infection—above all because such an argument would imply that *Demons* represents texts and ideologies as a disease that can be cured, and thus as something escapable. In fact Dostoevsky's novel does not invite us to imagine the possibility of a text-free, ideology-free world. Rather, while *Demons* clearly tells us that bad texts spread bad ideologies, it nonetheless implies that texts are all we have: they are the only reality available to us. We have no choice but to try to make sense of them, sorting wheat from chaff.

I base this conclusion in part on the passage in which Lizaveta Nikolaevna proposes to Shatov (probably the most sympathetic of the revolutionaries) that they undertake the publication of what she calls a "useful book." Liza's proposal outlines a certain approach to texts and their circulation, one that implies a strikingly hopeful view of print culture, notwithstanding its messiness and risk. While the passage is not in quotation marks, it appears to represent Liza's project in her own words rather than the narrator's. Describing the "multitude of *stolichnye* and provincial newspapers and other journals published in Russia, which report daily on a multitude of events," Liza laments the fact that these texts are not being preserved in a way that will render them accessible and useful. She notes that while "many of the facts that are published produce an impression and remain in the public's memory," they are eventually forgotten simply because "newspapers are everywhere stacked up in cupboards, or turned into trash ... Many people would like to consult them later, but what a labor it is to search through that sea of pages."¹⁸

Liza proposes a practical solution: "If all these facts for a whole year were collected in one book, according to a certain plan and a certain idea, with a table of contents, an index, a classification by month and

¹⁷ N. V. Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14 vols. (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1937-1952), 3: 222-223, 226-227.

¹⁸ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 103.

day—such an aggregation into one whole [*sovokupnost' v odno tseloe*] could represent a whole description [*kharakteristika*] of Russian life for all the year, even though what is published is only an extremely small portion of facts as compared with everything that happens." Liza lists examples of what the volume might contain: "curiosities, fires, donations, all sorts of good and bad deeds, all sorts of pronouncements and speeches, perhaps even news about flooded rivers, maybe even a few government decrees, but out of everything would be chosen only what portrays the epoch ... It would be, so to speak, a picture of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia over an entire year." She acknowledges that "not everything [could] be collected and reprinted"; all that is purely official, for example—"decrees, acts of the government, local directives, laws"—could be omitted, thereby "limiting the selection only to events that more or less express the personal moral life of the people, the personality of the Russian people at a given moment." Shatov, who is more sophisticated in such things than Liza, points out that pure objectivity would not be possible since any selection inevitably implies a "tendency" (*napravlenie*), but he does not see this as an argument against the project ("there's nothing wrong with a tendency," he says, and in any case "in the selection of facts there will [inevitably] be an indication of how they are to be understood"). Liza accepts Shatov's clarification and remains enthusiastic about the undertaking.¹⁹

In her implicit conviction that printed texts (especially journalistic texts) can be taken as a mirror of the nation ("a picture of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia," "the personality of the Russian people"), Liza reveals her belief in what Benedict Anderson has famously called the imagined communities constructed by reading publics, a belief based in a peculiarly modern view of print culture and its relationship to collective life. In Anderson's analysis, newspapers, like novels, have "provided the technical means" for depicting and to a great degree creating the "imagined community that is the nation."²⁰ They have been able to do so largely because the reader of a newspaper (or a novel) reads alone, but in constant awareness of a multitude of distant, unknown others, numberless strangers who are nonetheless firmly linked to the solitary reader by the fact that they are "[replicating] simultaneously" his or her consumption of

¹⁹ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 103-104.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991 [orig. pub. 1983], 25, 35.

a particular text.²¹ The collectivity created by such reading, which is the kind of community Anderson identifies with modern nationalism, is thus "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."²² And the "horizontal comradeship" of the nation is an imaginary structure well suited to being represented by texts that circulate widely and that tend to privilege the broad (rather than the deep) depiction of social relations, as do both newspaper and novel.

The modern nation's "horizontal" vision of the collective (horizontal in the sense that it is imagined as a vast fraternal web rather than as a hierarchy) relates to what Anderson, citing Walter Benjamin, calls the "horizontal" secular time of modernity. In this conception of time, simultaneity is not a matter of "prefiguring and fulfillment" (as in a Biblical exegete's typological and thus "vertical" conception of time, for example) but rather of "temporal coincidence, ... measured by clock and calendar."²³ Just as novels can be taken as "a complex gloss on the word 'meanwhile,'" newspapers count on our understanding that the events they record are linked primarily, if not exclusively, by the date at the top of the page, since this date provides these events' only "essential connection—

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

²² This pervasive image of the nation as an entity that is defined by fraternal ("horizontal") relations does not of course preclude inequality and exploitation in real life. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

²³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24. Anderson refers to Benjamin's discussion of "Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present," as well as to Erich Auerbach's famous analysis of typological time in the Old Testament story of Abraham and Isaac, in which the link between the sacrifice of Isaac and that of Christ cannot be "[established] by reason in the *horizontal* dimension," but "only if both occurrences are *vertically* linked to Divine Providence." Auerbach writes that in the Old Testament, "the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future." It is this "vertical" conception of time that Anderson, Auerbach and Benjamin (among others) set against modernity's (and the novel's and the newspaper's) "horizontal" time, what Anderson calls "homogeneous, empty time." See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1973), 265; and Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 64, emphases added. In this context one might also cite Michael Holquist's analysis of *Crime and Punishment*, in which he argues that the "disjunction between the temporal structure of the novel proper and its epilogue" stems from the fact that "the moment of [Raskolnikov's] conversion results in a diminished significance for chronology." Thus while the main narrative is about simultaneity in the modern ("horizontal") sense (and it therefore takes "hundreds of pages to tell of only two weeks"), the last paragraph (which "covers the rest of Raskolnikov's life") shifts into a more "vertical" kind of time. See Michael Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1986 [orig. pub. 1977]), 100.

the steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time."²⁴ Liza several times reiterates that the events forming the contents of her projected book will be united chiefly by the dates when they occurred. As a book that will convey "the personality of the Russian people *at a given moment*" ("facts for the whole year," "a description of Russian life for all the year," "a picture of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia over an entire year"), this is indeed a text that can be understood as "a complex gloss on the word 'meanwhile.'" In fact, given that the events Liza proposes for inclusion are markedly disparate (curiosities, fires, donations, speeches, flooded rivers), and given that the only factor appearing to bind them together is what Anderson calls "calendrical coincidence,"²⁵ her book seems to depend significantly on a (journalist's?) belief that things which happen more or less simultaneously (and to "Russians") bear some meaningful relationship to each other, a relationship that may well be elucidated simply by presenting them together in print.

Newspapers and novels—and Liza's project, which shares characteristics with both—can be seen as formal embodiments of such a belief. Thus *Demons* underlines the close relationship between these two forms, as if to illustrate Anderson's claim that a newspaper is in effect "a book sold on a colossal scale, but of ephemeral popularity."²⁶ Liza repeatedly calls her journalistic compilation a "book," insisting that it must be contained in a single volume (preferably "not even a very fat one") and that it must be above all "clear" and "interesting even for light reading, not to mention how indispensable it will be as a reference!"²⁷ In these stipulations she identifies precisely the characteristics that allow novel and newspaper to insinuate themselves into everyday experience to such an extent that they become almost indistinguishable from lived life: portability and accessibility ("lightness" in both senses), clarity and ease of comprehension, utility and ubiquity.²⁸

The description of Liza's project is intriguing for many reasons, but at this point the whole topic is dropped, never to be taken up again in the course of the novel. Nonetheless the passage offers another way into Dostoevsky's views on print culture, a perspective that undermines the

²⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33.

²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33.

²⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 34.

²⁷ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 10: 103-104.

²⁸ As Anderson writes, thanks to the omnipresence of newspaper and novel, "fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality." Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

print-as-infection interpretation that I proposed above. Dostoevsky is, I think, fundamentally sympathetic to Liza's idea, as evidenced immediately by the fact that this idea appears to come to us in Liza's own words, undistorted by the garrulity, contradictoriness, and unreliability that characterize the narrator's discourse. Furthermore, if printed texts were contagions, we would expect a wholesale rejection of their taint and an effort to contain it (or perhaps a relativist assumption that all texts are equal, that is, equally corrupt and corrupting). Instead *Demons* seems to endorse, or at the very least not to condemn, a project aimed at disseminating texts even more widely, making them available to as many readers as possible and allowing these readers to judge for themselves. Liza's assumption is that an ongoing labor of selection and interpretation—along with, as Shatov points out, the correct point of view—can make sense of the artifacts of print culture, despite their bewildering superabundance. The "useful book" Liza proposes will not yield eternal truths, since it will represent the nation only "at a given moment," but it will yield information and meaning—a claim that suggests quite a positive view of how print culture works, or how it might work.

Some critics have pointed out similarities between Liza's undertaking and Dostoevsky's own *Diary of a Writer*, noting that her idea reflects Dostoevsky's belief that "the analysis of seemingly disconnected factual events could tell the discerning eye much about the national life."²⁹ Others have disagreed, arguing that the project is shown to be fatally flawed because it will inevitably contain some "tendency," and that this passage thus participates in the whole novel's pessimistic "[denial of] the possibility of an accurate and stable version of the truth."³⁰ Certainly it is true that the narration of *Demons* provides nothing on which we might base "an accurate and stable version of the truth": the entire story is founded on rumor, speculation and slander, and ambiguity works to the advantage of evil. Everything is reported to us by a slippery narrator who is either naïve or very cagey or both, a narrator who provides us not with truth but with what has been described as "an account of what people say, and of what people say people say, in an endless labyrinth of speculation and hearsay."³¹

²⁹ Gary Saul Morson, "Introductory Study," Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, vol. I, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern U.P., 1994), 7-8; Moser, "Dostoevsky and the Aesthetics of Journalism," 36.

³⁰ Gene M. Moore, "The Voices of Legion: The Narrator of *The Possessed*," *Dostoevsky Studies*, vol. 6, 1985, 61.

³¹ Moore, "The Voices of Legion," 62.

But print culture in *Demons* cannot be interpreted simply as taking part in the novel's swirl of pernicious rumors and half-truths, just as the murderous ideology of the revolutionaries should not be taken to mean that Dostoevsky is rejecting "ideology" itself. (As Charles Moser has written, "Dostoevsky rejected the particular theories advanced by the radicals ... but not the advisability of elaborating a theory in itself: Dostoevsky was far too ideological a writer for that."³²) Rather, Dostoevsky's sympathetic representation of Liza's project acknowledges the inescapability of ideology in a particular sense, ideology not as misrecognition or false consciousness but as the discourses that shape our perceptions, establishing "a set of practical relations with the 'real.'"³³ As Fredric Jameson writes, what happened ("the Real") is always an "absent cause," that is, unavailable to us directly. Therefore we must make do with what we have, and what we have are texts: "[history] is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious."³⁴ This, I think, is what Dostoevsky acknowledges in Liza's project.

In an 1869 letter to Strakhov Dostoevsky wrote, "in every issue of the newspaper, you find reports of the most realistic [*deistvitel'nye*] as well as the oddest facts. Our writers see them as fantastic and ignore them. Nonetheless they are reality, because they are facts [*a mezhdru tem oni deistvitel'nost', potomu chto oni fakty*]."³⁵ This assertion is startling for what appears to be its conflation of "newspaper reporting" with "facts"; facts are facts, Dostoevsky seems to imply, because they are printed in the newspapers. Of course Dostoevsky did not think that newspapers were never inaccurate. Rather, what this statement points to is his conviction that printed words are the "deeds" that create reality itself.

Demons does not fail to recognize the dangers inherent in this situation and in the wide circulation of print. Dostoevsky makes it abundantly clear that printed texts—even "good" ones, and even in the hands of

³² Moser, "Dostoevsky and the Aesthetics of Journalism," 34-35.

³³ Terry Eagleton, "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative," *Social Text* no. 2 (Summer 1979), 63.

³⁴ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1981), 35.

³⁵ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, vol. 29, part 1: 19. Quoted in Klioutchkine, "The Rise of Crime and Punishment from the Air of the Media," 99.

"good" readers—are always to some degree out of control.³⁶ Indeed, one of the key problems in the novel is the extent to which one person's ideas can be judged responsible for another person's actions, a problem that is directly analogous to the questions of intentionality and responsibility raised by the spread of print. How responsible is a writer for what a reader decides to do on the basis of what he or she has read? Were the authors who influenced Raskolnikov guilty of murder?³⁷ *Demons* acknowledges these dangers, yet in the end the novel reflects the convictions of a professional journalist. When Dostoevsky initially conceived of *Demons* as a "pamphlet," he signaled his conviction that we have to fight texts with texts.³⁸ The novel is not the work of someone who would urge us to eschew print culture, even at its most dangerously ideologized, and retire to the purity of (say) Yasnaya Polyana, or Rome.

In this sense Gogol's heir is not Dostoevsky but rather Tolstoy (especially late Tolstoy), who shared Gogol's apophatic leanings and thus his suspicion toward the surfeit of words being generated and circulated in print culture. In *What Is Art?*, for example, Tolstoy focuses obsessively on the vast quantities of texts being sent out into the world every day. Over and over he cites the mind-numbing numbers: "thousands of lyrics, thousands of long poems, thousands of novels, thousands of dramas, thousands of paintings, thousands of musical compositions"; "if not millions, at least hundreds of thousands of copies are typeset and printed (some distributed in the tens of thousands)."³⁹ For Tolstoy, these numbers point to the superfluity and ultimately the meaninglessness of printed words. But in *Demons* Dostoevsky takes note of the same excess that troubles Tolstoy—what Liza describes as an ever-accumulating "sea of pages," unnavigable in its vastness—in order to propose a way of extracting the real meanings that are buried in these pages. Thus Liza's project affirms the conviction that Tolstoy mocks in the character of Koznyshev, who naively (naively, that is, in Tolstoy's judgment) believes that in the press "the voice of the Russian people is heard." If for Dostoevsky printed

³⁶ The same holds true for anything that has been written down, as Plato notes in *Phaedrus* (275a-278a) and in the "Seventh Letter" (344c). But with the advent of print technology and wide circulation, the problem becomes especially acute.

³⁷ As one critic has asked, "when one man's idle fantasies become another's rigid faith, is the former responsible for actions the latter may commit in the name of his own ideas?" Moore, "The Voices of Legion," 51.

³⁸ Dostoevskii, *PSS*, vol. 29, part 1: 112.

³⁹ L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1951), 30: 142, 103.

words are the real world (despite their unreliability and their problematic copiousness), in *Anna Karenina* printed words have little to do with reality.⁴⁰ Tolstoy would likely have concurred with Gogol's indictment of print culture as the "terrifying reign of words in the place of deeds," an assessment that is perhaps as far as possible from Dostoevsky's ringing declaration that "the word is a great deed!"

⁴⁰ While this holds true for the world of *Anna Karenina*, it is not precisely true for Tolstoy himself, who was well aware of the ways in which the press could affect the real world by influencing—if not exactly "expressing"—"public opinion." For example, in 1873 Tolstoy wrote a long letter to *Moskovskie vedomosti* describing the famine in Samara province, and the public outcry generated by his journalistic intervention inspired both government action and large-scale private donations—thus clearly illustrating Tolstoy's understanding of the relationship between press, public opinion, and real-life events.

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Grushenka

Introduction

My main hypothesis is that the character of Grushenka, at first acquaintance an irresistibly attractive young business woman with a bad reputation in some quarters, is, going deeper, a condensation symbol and an encapsulation of many of Dostoevsky's religious ideas as they center on love, beauty, and redemption from sin through truthfulness, above all, through honesty about oneself. In other words, rather than being a mere ancillary to the conspicuous brothers and their unsightly father, Grushenka is the center (the play-maker) around whom the others gyrate with their ideas and personalities. Shifting heuristic metaphors, Grushenka is the black center of the Karamazovian kaleidoscope around which the more visible colors circle in their permutations: the red of Dmitri, the blues of Alyosha, the many greys of Ivan. At the epi-center of all this figurative circling stand two scenes, conjoined in the middle of the book: "The little onion" and "The marriage at Cana," as will be shown below.

Grushenka: A Holography, Metaphorically Speaking

Grushenka's role in the polyphonic, polythematic world of *The Brothers Karamazov* is partly symbolized through the extraordinary number of ways she is seen, alluded to, described, lauded or villified, ranging, depending on the speaker and the situation, from a whore and street-walker, to a low woman or fornicatrice, to a woman of bad behavior, to a sexually conniving seductress, to a "provincial hetaera," to "fantastic, bewitching" and "sullied," to "the queen of insolence," to a cat or sly fox, to a "creature," to "a woman who has loved much," to "an infernal one," to a skill-

ful and merciless business woman (in the ruthless capitalism of Russia in the 1870s), to a virtuous woman, to a victimized girl“ who fell once in her youth, being influenced by circumstances,” to lofty and honorable, “holier than all of you,” as Fyodor put it, since the upper class Katerina “is not worthy to lick her boots,” to “a complete Jewess” in her wealth and business deals, to a saint or an angel, to a woman transformed and redeemed going off with her true love to share the hardships of Siberia. Grushenka herself is variegated in her self-descriptions: “I am good-hearted and virtuous, but wicked and willful, a fool” (also referencing the saintly holy fools of Russia). No protagonist in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in any case, is spoken of in so many ways, many of them contradictory. As the first narrator says, “the biography of the young woman was only slightly and inconsistently known in our town.”¹

Grushenka: Toward a Feminist Biography

Let us turn from holography to the essential biography of Aggripina Alexandrovna Svetlova² that is feminist in spirit although lacking the technical terms of those myriad ideologies.

Grushenka’s father served as a deacon in her church. Her family prayed, sang hymns. *The Lives of the Saints* were on some page in her soul but on another were tales she memorized of teens who’d fled from home with dashing men. He played the guitar, he sang, he was an officer with a moustache and so she fell in love, only to be jilted; he went off to Siberia, married, and left her a thin, consumptive crybaby—and mad. She’d lie awake whole nights thinking, sobbing, boiling for vengeance: “I will repay him!” Her family left her in poverty and disgrace, only to sell her; she was bought, bound to wed by the devil. Was it marriage? No, it was the protection of a fifty-year-old sensualist, a well-known lecher, her “oldie.” He kept her for two years, but he also liked her: “You are a

¹ There are, of course, other heroines in world literature with comparable holographies, notably Thackeray’s Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*. Moreover, since Russians are as prone to obscenities as other peoples, both in quantity and quality, we have to assume that a great deal of the bad-mouthing of Grushenka involved locutions that our imagination can supply to supplement the relatively censor-enforced chastity of Dostoevsky’s text (Drummond and Perkins 1980).

² Grushenka’s last name derives from the Russian root for “light” (*svet*), which occurs early on and saliently in John (e.g. 1: 3, 19-22) and repeatedly thereafter: “In him was the life; and the life was the light of men.” The ambiguity of “light” converts the miracle of restoring sight into a parable of revelation in John 9.

wench with brains,” he said, “You must look after yourself.” He schooled her in business, gave her eight thousand rubles as a starter, but left her out of his will. Then he became dependant on her, insisting that she keep his books, which she did once a month. She was good at business, by hook or by crook: “buy a buck for a cent then sell a cent of that dollar for another dollar.” The world isn’t that simple, she knew, but that was her strategy in her *gesheft*. She entered into usurious loan deals with a friend of shady practices that he’d learned from Jewish partners in Odessa. By twenty-two she was called “an absolute Jewess.” Suitors flocked to her in the house where she had been set up by her oldie, not just for her reputed wealth but what someone called her “rosy-cheeked, full-bodied beauty.” They called her Grushenka, or Little Pear—one of the standard hypocoristic variations on Agrafena (from Agrippina), which, in the context of the novel, has a particularly affectionate ring.

What are the implications and consequences of this life history, sticking, as I have, to the basic facts? First, the combined experiences made her “angry and arrogant,” hostile to men of all kinds, such as the many suitors of whom she made a laughing stock through her rejections, contemptuous toward others such as her own “oldie protector” and the lecherous Fyodor Karamazov, or fearful of their violence, as of Dmitri’s, but at the same time herself, as she repeatedly worded it, “violent, fierce, and angry”—and ready to pack a knife. Her being abandoned, then “sold” could account for her cruel streak, symbolized by the occasional expression of her lips.³

In sum, we have, on the one hand, the numerous and often derogatory characterizations by local townsfolk and the two narrators that are itemized above; the literary critics to this day are as diverse and often as negative (see below). What Dostoevsky gives us, on the other hand, reveals a resourceful, tough, extremely intelligent and extremely passionate woman who survived an adolescence that would try any of us and who, at the time of *The Brothers Karamazov*, was moving toward the middle echelons of a society that, as noted, was economically ruthless and viciously judgmental. During the same four years, one must infer, there had evolved an emotional and religious inner nature that enabled her to re-

³ The “real-life prototype” of Grushenka was Grushenka Men’shova, “she of the delicately curving little foot and the sweet voice... a great intimate of Dostoevsky’s wife, Anna Grigorievna, confiding in her the affairs of her heart to such an extent that Fyodor Mikhaylovich was even occasionally jealous” (Tsyarkin 2001: 65); while this information comes from a novel we are assured that the author was meticulous concerning factual accuracy about Dostoevsky.

spond adequately to the news of Zosima's death and the complex person of the young monk, Alyosha. She was also bothered by guilt and shame at her "fall," as seen by her townsfolk and in light of her Russian Orthodox upbringing.

Two Summaries

As a preliminary to the main act let's mention the hyper-dramatic confrontation where Katerina, wanting to get Grushenka away from Dmitri, uses (an inclusive) "we," and, ostentatiously respectful, kisses her "plump little hand," whereas Grushenka, seeing through these ploys, puts on a saccharine voice and a nervous little laugh but then, after promising 300 kisses, withdraws her hand. Commuting the chocolates and kisses into a failed hoax, she overturns social conventions and hierarchies with a remorseless honesty that is consistent with the ethics of equality between humans that is taught by Zosima and is ubiquitous in the Gospels.

A second preliminary: even a cursory synopsis of the "Delirium" chapter leads to one incontrovertible conclusion. Near the start Grushenka upbraids her "former one" for using Polish, and then, to Dmitri, "Sit down! What a shame! Is there something to cry about?" One page later she flares up at her former one, and then rejects the toast to Poland: "I want to drink to Russia!" Then, as Dmitri and the Poles argue, she stamps her foot, eyes flashing, and snarls at Dmitri, "Sit down, silly man." At the game of cards she calls them all "Indian cocks," and, hearing that Dmitri tried to pay the Poles to leave, "Am I goods for sale?" and, to Dmitri, "How dare you defend me!" After the Poles are thrown out, or stalk out, she shouts, "Bravo!" mercilessly and maliciously," as Dostoevsky puts it. (During all this it gradually dawns on Dmitri that her attitude toward him is making a 180° turn.)

In the course of eighteen pages, or one or two hours, the twenty-two year old Grushenka, snarling and shouting and ultimately "merciless and malicious," emerges dominant over six men: Dmitri, the two Poles, her young friend Kalganov, her old-man friend Maksimushka, and the inn-keeper. In terms of "Grushenka dominant," this scene makes a perfect structural twin to the earlier one called "The two together," where she is also called a whore, but turns the tables on the aristocratic, superbly educated Katerina Ivonovna.

Grushenka and Alyosha: A Close Reading of a Central Text: "A Little Onion"

The immediately preceding chapter is called "An opportune moment" because it ends with Rakitin inviting Alyosha: "Let's go to Grushenka!" Dostoevsky leaves no doubt about what's ahead when Rakitin thinks of Alyosha's fall "from saints to sinners." While the young men are on their way, we read a description of Grushenka by the first narrator that runs like an ekphrasis from Goya:

Under her head were two white down pillows taken from her bed. She was lying stretched out motionless on her back with her hands behind her head. She was dressed up as though expecting someone, in a black silk dress with a delicate three-cornered kerchief on her head, which was very becoming; over her shoulders was thrown a lace shawl pinned with a massive gold brooch. She certainly was expecting someone. She was lying filled with longing and impatience, her face rather pale, her lips and eyes hot, impatiently tapping the arm of the sofa with the tip of her right foot.

A later portrait is by the same narrator but looking through the eyes and thinking the thoughts of the young Alyosha:

She came over playfully, sat down next to Alyosha on the sofa and looked at him with positive delight. She was really glad, she was not lying when she said so.... Her whole manner also seemed to have changed for the better since the day before: there was almost no trace of that saccharine pronunciation, of those effete and affected movements... everything was simple, simple-hearted, her movements were quick, direct, trusting, but she was very excited.⁴

Cutting through all Grushenka's tension and stress, Alyosha had walked in, handsome, youthful, innocent, as totally welcome as he had been totally unexpected. "I've been waiting for you," she exclaims, "Dear me, how everything comes together today," and later, "You are a prince," and then, "A young moon,"⁵ and finally, "I'll cheer you up." She jumps on his lap, like a nestling kitten, and puts her right arm around his neck. Alyosha, whose sadness and mourning for Father Zosima had been called an "armour," experiences what Dostoevsky calls "a new, strange feeling"; this woman whom he had feared above all—and he does fear women—arouses "the most pure-hearted curiosity."

⁴ This vivid vignette recapitulates and condenses from the twice-as-long earlier one in "The two together"; essential to Dostoevsky's art, as to Homer's, were (more or less) parallel scenes.

⁵ For a young woman to call a young man whom she was just met, "A moon," is another minor untranslatability; "young moon" is one of the Russian folklore epithets for a hero.

At the news of Zosima's death, which had already been alluded to, she jumps off Alyosha's knees and cries out with genuine sympathy, at which Alyosha's face "lights up." Paralleling or echoing Grushenka, he confesses that he came "evil" (*zol*), but realizes that he has found "a sister, a treasure, a loving soul. You have restored my soul," to which Grushenka counters, to Rakitin, "I am evil (*zla*), not good (*dobra*). I wanted to swallow him but now I am his sister. I gave him an onion." Here and elsewhere we witness Grushenka's total symbolic commutation from a devouring to a feeding figure. Later Alyosha says, "I came to be destroyed," implying some level of sexual downfall, "but she is higher than us." Rakitin exclaims that they are both crazy, that they have fallen in love. But now the omniscient narrator gives us one of the most surcharged, pregnant and critically neglected sentences in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and indeed, Dostoevsky studies, comparable in significance to the ones that climax Raskolnikov's confession in *Crime and Punishment*. What the narrator says is: "For both of them everything had come together which could shake their souls, as happens not often in life." Note that this has been anticipated by Grushenka's earlier exclamation, that everything was "coming together" that day.⁶

Here follows Grushenka's story of the little onion. A totally evil (*zlava*) woman had never helped or given, but once: an onion to a passing indigent. Her savior angel, after pleading with God, is pulling her from the lake of fire in Hell but, when other sinners cling to her, she kicks at them, the onion shoot breaks, and she sinks back into the flames to boil forever. The Russian folk connotations of "A little onion," incidentally, "contribute to the process whereby Dostoevsky's works assume great metaphysical significance" (Wigzell 202: 44-5). In a shift of the Dostoevskian kaleidoscope, it is the "infernal seductress" who with her generous act extends her onion to the young monk, outwardly holy and chaste but inwardly famished not just for the saintly love of a Zosima but for the love of a woman, like Grushenka, a body-and-soul-mate.

Grushenka, whose repeated self-deprecation reminds me of Helen of Troy's "bitch," but is also a verbalization of Christian humility, recurs here and in many places to the theme of her evil, varying on the Russian root *zlo-/zol*, this time with an interesting intensification that illustrates the potential "poetry in grammar": "I am *zlava*" (using the long, feminine

⁶ Grushenka's later life has been the subject of diverse speculations. N. Hoffman wrote that "'the sinner Grushenka' breaks up Alyosha's marriage with Lise and threatens to ruin him, but after his erratic life he returns to the monastery purified" (Rice 2006: 51).

form), malevolent, evil, furious, *zlyushchaya* (apparently from the verb *zlit'sya*), very malevolent, doing evil, enraged, *prezlushchaya* (with the intensifying prefix *pre-*).⁷ Later she says, "He has turned my heart upside down. He pitied me, the only one (to do so), that's what. Why didn't you come here before?" She suddenly fell before him on her knees as though in a frenzy. "All my life I've been waiting for someone like you and knew that such a one would come and forgive me. I believed that someone would love me, nasty as I am, not only out of shameful love alone."⁸

Grushenka's parable of "A little onion" is central not only in the book's orchestration, but because it encapsulates and essentializes the epiphanies of all three of the brothers Karamazov: Alyosha's of Christ through Mary turning water into wine for the indigent, of Dmitri's anguish over the little babe, blue with cold, for whom he wants to suffer, and Ivan's black epiphany of the tortures of little children, polar antitheses to the generous act. Grushenka integrates the symbolism of the book as a whole.

The extreme message that Dostoevsky is trying to convey to us beneath the mind-boggling turn-taking and shifts of attitude is clinched by the critical organizational fact, in this masterfully orchestrated book, that Grushenka's parable of the little onion is positioned directly before, as a companion piece in a diptych, to the miracle story of the wedding feast at Cana; "the striking fact is that, in the main, the parallels to folklore [in Dostoevsky] are found in places which touch upon, and dramatize, themes of the greatest importance to the author" (Gibian 1956: 251). Not only are the scenes juxtaposed, but toward the end of the reading of John 2.1-11 in a cell redolent with the stench of his corpse Father Zosima emerges epiphanically in Alyosha's dream or vision. Speaking in Grushenka's idiom of the little onion, "We are rejoicing," the little wizened man continued, "we are drinking new wine, the wine of a great new joy. See how many guests there are? Here are the bridegroom and the bride, here is the ruler of the feast, tasting the new wine. Why are you marveling at me? I gave an onion, and so I am here. And there are many here who gave an onion, only one little onion... What are our deeds? And

⁷ Here she uses the long form, *zlaya*, implying a general state, whereas earlier she had used the short form, *zla*, for a present condition (speaking to Rakitin); the short form can also mean "angry," but that is not the case with its earlier use by Alyosha. I have the impression that Grushenka's speech involves more the most creative use of grammar of all the characters; this calls for further analysis.

⁸ The gesture alludes not only to the falling-down before elsewhere in *The Brothers Karamazov*, but to Mary Magdalene falling to her feet before Jesus in John 11:32.

you, quiet one, my meek boy, today you, too, were able to give a little onion to a woman who hungered. Begin, my dear, begin, my meek one, to do your work!" Note that whereas earlier it was Grushenka who spoke of offering a little onion to Alyosha, Father Zosima has commuted this to Alyosha offering a little onion to a woman who hungered, that is, to Grushenka. Zosima's commutation probably symbolizes the symbolic reciprocated gifts between bride and groom before the wedding: tokens of mutual generosity and goodwill. Moreover, her "Little Pear," from the expensive and luscious actual pears, has now been associated with the humble onion, the fruit of the poor. She is learning Christian humility. In sum, "the infernal one" and the saintly monk are integrated through a symbolic commutation that gives profound substance to the simple juxtaposition of chapters into a diptych. That Dostoevsky saw the two chapters as tandem is suggested by the key role of candles in each (Matlaw (2) n. d.). The issue of the diptych is clinched by the author's statement in a letter: "The last chapter.... *Cana of Galilee* is the most significant in the whole of Book VII, perhaps the whole novel.... PS.... I particularly beg you to proofread the legend of the *little onion* carefully. This is a gem, taken down by me from a peasant woman, and of course published for *the first time*." Dostoevsky originally planned to call Book VII "Grushenka" (Miller 1992: 81-2).

Interlude: Dostoevskian Love

Let us expand on Dostoevsky's idea of love because it is connected with *Karamazovshchina*. Both Grushenka and Alyosha repeatedly characterize themselves using the Russian ethical terms *zol* and *dobr* with their emotional aureolae. Their duet on good and evil, which runs to three pages, is a context for the basic process of an elective affinity where a carnal, obviously sexual love between two young people, whose bodies have been pressed together just moments before, merges with a love of many kinds—all variations of the comprehensive Dostoevskian philosophy of love that partly governs and orients *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Let us delve yet deeper into this philosophy. Most ostensibly, it is grounded in the sensuous or voluptuous, the carnal, the pleasures and torments of the flesh. Second, it is active in this empirical world, which means that it is reciprocal or interactive, entailing empathy and synergy between souls, not self-serving, manipulative or exploitative. Love, as Paul and Camus have said, is patient, enduring the flaws of the other. It is spontaneous or immanent rather than calculated or reasoned, and, by the

same token, it is not dictated by obligation or duty. Finally, Dostoevsky's sensuous love is balanced at least potentially by its metaphysical reach to the divine love. It is Grushenka, after all, who says, "You shall love for no reason." To reduce this heuristically to a nutshell: Alyosha and Grushenka are drawn to each other by a fusion of Eros and *agape*.

By "metaphysical love" I mean love that is conceived and felt as involving soul, depths of personality, if you will, life after death in several senses, and a supernatural power often called "God"—and their interconnections. Grushenka, Dmitri and Alyosha repeatedly invoke the soul, immortality, and God. In his novelistic argument for the many-chambered love that comprehends and transcends the human and the divine, Dostoevsky joins company with the great Sufi mystics such as Rumi, and the Spanish mystics such as St. John of the Cross—this has been intuited by various theologians.

The theological, partly concealed meaning of Grushenka is further developed by Ivan's poem of The Grand Inquisitor, the politics of which has so fascinated the critics. We hear a summary of a medieval tale from Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*.⁹ Mary descends into Hell where countless sinners are being boiled in a fiery lake. On her return she tearfully implores God to spare and forgive these wretched souls. He refuses. The tale, clearly prophoric to Grushenka's tale of the little onion, one hundred pages later, is also synergistic with Alyosha's vision of the miracle at Cana, where Mary nurtures the poor. Mary the Mother of God at Cana, Mary the Intercessor in Heaven and Hell, both symbolizing the forgiveness of sinners, are high religious contexts for Grushenka as all-forgiving. As she says during "Delirium": "God forgives. If I were God, I would forgive all sinners: 'My dear sinners, from this day on I am forgiving everyone'." The Marian symbolism achieves a further, Dostoevskian depth through Grushenka's analogies to Mary Magdalene, both through her reputation as a courtesan, albeit falsely alleged, and through her actual and well-suggested sexual and sensuous nature. Grushenka emerges as a Marian figure in the fullest possible sense of the word, fuller than that of any other figure in world literature, as far as I know.¹⁰

⁹ Dostoevsky has Ivan getting this from Victor Hugo, as would be consistent with his characterization of him as dependent on Western culture; in fact, the tale of Mary the Mother of God descending into Hell came out of the Russian Middle Ages (ultimately from a Greek text) and enjoyed wide popularity in Dostoevsky's day (S. Zenkovsky 1974, Gudziy 1973).

¹⁰ In the senses being argued in this paper, Grushenka is a redeemed Nastasya Filipovna, the religiously enigmatic heroine of Dostoevsky's earlier *The Idiot*.

But let us not idealize love; Dostoevsky does not. In addition to the central values of forgiveness and redemption, Dostoevsky's theory of love embraces masochistic love and the beauty of being victimized in love, the love of one's own suffering—not only of Katerina, as criticized by Ivan, but of other characters including Grushenka, who says, "I've grown to love my tears, my resentment." Dostoevsky also recognized many shades of jealousy including its role for many people as a litmus test of passionate, life-loving love: the jealousy between father and son, over a woman, of women over a man, of vindictive jealousy as expounded severally by both Grushenka and Dmitri, where you deliberately make someone jealous because that person has been tormenting you with the same emotion. Dostoevsky's theory of love, finally, comprises love-hatred, where you hate for various reasons because of your love; as Dmitri puts it: "I hated you, loving." In other words: I hate you because I love you and I love you because I hate you. Jealous and masochistic love, like love-hatred, are the dark or black sides of selfless love, and deepen its meaning.

In the very last paragraph of the book proper, as the innocent Dmitri is being led away to prison, we hear "from the balcony, above, in the backmost corner, there rang out a piercing woman's wail. It was Grushenka." Although this is a courtroom, Dostoevsky does not actually say "balcony" or "gallery," as the translators would have it, but "choir" (*khory*) that is, the place above and behind the congregation from which the voices of women come down to us in what for most of us is the most moving component of the Russian Orthodox service. In other words, near the end Grushenka's voice is coming down from the so-called "choir," just as early on we learn that she grew up in a family of the clergy caste.¹¹

Summary, and Grushenka in Theory

One thing that fascinates us about Grushenka is the numerous ways she is perceived and conceptualized, as itemized above. The literary critics, be it stressed, are as diverse as the folk of Stockyard, typically limiting themselves to an essentializing sentence or two that leave her a marginal adjunct to a male protagonist; for example, "hetaira/Magdalene" (Schlo-

¹¹ In the 1860s and 1870s the Russian Orthodox clergy still constituted a caste or semi-caste, with distinctive dress, customs, and so forth, while *khory*, strictly speaking, denotes the place, it is closely associated with (the singers of) the choir (*khor*).

chower 1970: 270 covers a page), or, in one sentence, Dmitri's love lived on the border of its opposite (Bakhtin 1985: 176), or one passing reference (Gibson 1973), or, in three sentences (e.g., Alyosha was dreaming of Grushenka, she insulted Katerina, Wasiolek 1964), or she's a small-town hetaira with some functions vis-à-vis other, male characters (Trubetskoy 1964: 171).¹² Not one of these critics draws the connection to Mary the Mother of Christ. Many, perhaps most, say nothing at all: Belknap (1989), Ivanov (1952), Nabokov (1981), Vivas (1962), and Leatherbarrow (2002). Belknap's gap is particularly intriguing given Grushenka's many functions within the book's *structure*, Gibson's because of what should be Grushenka's crucial role in any exposition of Dostoevsky's religion. Frank, the leading biographer of Dostoevsky, does mention her in his fifth and final volume, but via a half-dozen clauses scattered *en route* up until the part in books 6-8; she is reduced to a marginal stereotype ("sensuous, tantalizing, alluring," etc.). When Frank does get to her more fully in the section on books 6-8, his summary and interpretation of the plot still treats her as ancillary to the male protagonists with which he and most other critics are concerned. His handling of her conflict with Katerina Ivanovna is adequate, be it said, in general, but the deep psychological and religious import of Grushenka is ignored. Mochulsky, the second biographer in line of status, does make a half-dozen points and has a good page on "A little onion," but undercuts it all with "Dostoevsky's women do not have their own personal history" (1967: 599). Morson in his three excellent books neglects Grushenka but, in an essay called "The God of Onions" (2005), discloses the basic hostility which warps his interpretation: Grushenka shows up in two pages as "wickedly" bribing Rakitin to accomplish "Alyosha's ruin," her motives are "perverse," she thinks like Fyodor Pavlovich, has "wallowed in sin" for five years, "hardly knows what has happened," and exemplifies "the spiteful logic of offense and resentment"; although the article is ostensibly *about her parable of the onion*, she is reduced to its perverse vessel or vehicle. The banal characterization is Curle's (1966: 195): after a half dozen clauses on Grushenka as an adjunct to male characters, we read, "Grushenka, though a hussy on the surface, with all the enslaving tricks of a hussy, was at heart respectable and unimaginative." Most fascinating of the zero options is Freud and the Freudian critics in his wake such as Wasiolek, be-

¹² Leaving aside the original, Classic Greek denotation of courtesan friend, a "hetaira" in Dostoevsky's day and our own, can be a) a sophisticated courtesan, b) a concubine, or c) a euphemism for prostitute. Schlochower and Trubetskoy are between the second and third of these.

cause Grushenka or women in her position in the psychological structure of a novel, should in principle figure crucially in any oedipal theoretic reading. One irony, as noted, is that these variously dismissive or derogatory readings of scholars today and yesterday closely resemble those of many of the townsfolk of Stockyard (or Cattlepen) and, indeed, of Dostoevsky's own contemporaries (I owe this observation to an earlier one about Emma Bovary, the citizens of her communities, and the critics of *Madame Bovary* (Radulescu 2002: 230-35)). Terras (2002) and the authors of the four Brown University doctoral dissertations that he supervised and cites make many solid points about Grushenka while missing the main ones which are being argued here. These various critics do not—in a sense apparently cannot—see that Grushenka should not be reduced to a stereotype of any sort, good or bad, but is a unique protagonist and a condensation symbol of Dostoevsky's personal religion.

There is some light amid the critics' gloom. First, Miller in her fine, synoptic (1992) book has several pages of judicious observations on Grushenka and her role in the novel. Second, a brilliant ray is cast by the pages entitled "the memory of religious folklore and legends" as part of the sometimes incandescent analysis my Thompson (1992). Her points here include the Alyosha/Grushenka exchange as an epiphany (as defined, e.g., by James Joyce), the role of childhood memory in Grushenka's awareness of the parable and Alyosha's appreciation of her, the role of confession in salvation in Grushenka's case, the powerful analogues between Grushenka's behavior and that of Alyosha's mother and Mary Magdalene, that is, of Christ, and the transformation of a potential crime of vengeance into a willingness to forgive; Grushenka's fable or parable functions "as a seed planted early in her soul, dormant until a moment of spiritual crisis when it suddenly springs to life and acquires a redemptive function" (ibid. 116). In Thompson's eyes Grushenka becomes a theoretically (e.g. theologically) interesting and individuated, albeit still minor protagonist.

The individuation of Grushenka is achieved in various ways by Dostoevsky through her earthiness already dealt with above, which is part of her ethnicity; she is both stereotypically and quintessentially Russian, as emphasized by many events and in many voices, notably Dmitri's at several points. Hers was a Russian beauty of the sort loved so passionately by many, a transient beauty that one often finds in Russian women, as the narrator puts it. Grushenka's beauty is perhaps universal in the "infernal" curves of her body but very specific to a Russian, even Dostoevskian (or Pushkinian) culture in the focus on her foot and even her little

toe. Her beauty, far from being just physical, is also ethical because it arises from bridging social categories in several ways. Another side of her ethnicity: she is, as demonstrated above, center stage in word and deed in the very Russian carnivalization of the "Delirium" chapter when she demands that her "indisputable one" speak Russian. From Gibian's laudatory albeit exaggerated point of view, Grushenka is "the embodiment of the salutary influence of the Russian people and of Russian womanhood in particular" (1956: 249). In the way she fuses erotic vitality, (Russian) earthiness, spontaneous sincerity, (Russian) components of what used to be called "the Russian idea" (e.g., Beryaev 1923, Pesmen 2002), she stands as a master symbol for Dostoevsky's idealized Russia. We know that the Russian idea was at the forefront of Dostoevsky's thoughts in the 1870s, and in his action, and that he advocated Pochevennost, The Earth Movement. In all these terms, Grushenka incarnates or represents values that Dostoevsky felt strongly and tried to persuade us to feel if not to comprehend rationally. This, in sum, means that she is ideologically coordinate with the three Karamazov brothers.¹³

A second reason Grushenka fascinates us is that she is at the margin of things—liminal—but also central psychologically and to the plot. She, as noted at the outset, is the most holographed of all the characters and a litmus paper for them, including Ivan, whose calling her a "beast" indexes his alienation from his family and Russia, yet, as also noted, whose virgin Mary anecdote sets us up for the "A little onion" parable. Paradigmatically liminal, Grushenka dissolves class and caste boundaries through her upward mobility and the role reversals she achieves vis-à-vis Katerina, Kuzma, and many others (see "Grushenka Dominant" above). She is "natural" in the sense of being violent, volatile and tempestuous, but she is also quintessentially cultural in her exquisite dress and precocious financial skills. At a deeper ethical level she is evil-hearted and malevolent and also good and good-hearted, alternately, sometime simultaneously. She can be a mistress of deceit, as to Katerina and Fyodor, but also absolutely honest including to and about herself, and so consistent with perhaps the basic tenet in Zosima's teaching. As she words it in her direct, sincere, honest and often folksy way, speaking of her own liminal status in "Delirium," "Tomorrow to a nunnery, but today we'll dance... I am a beast, but I want to pray. I have a little onion. An evil-minded person

¹³ Lena Steiner points out a related ideological issue implied at many points in this paper: Dostoevsky, like Pushkin, was a feminist *avant la lettre*, ready to liberate women from their culturally prescribed role and let them define their destinies (e.g., Vol'skaya, Laura, and Dunya); see also Straus 1994, p. 120.

like me wants to pray. Mitya, let them dance, don't interfere. Everyone on earth is good, to the last one. It's good on earth. Even though we're vile, it's good on earth. Vile we are, both vile and good." Here Grushenka defines not only her marginality but her variant of *Karamazovshchina*.¹⁴

Going deeper, she is the immediate or, if you will, the efficient cause of incest—father and son competing for and potentially sharing one woman, and from that, of murder, parricidal murder. This combination represents to us in extreme form the liminal terrors of mingled blood and sex—tabooed antitheses that live in some form throughout the world. She is an extreme beauty, a *ras-krasavitsa*, but the physical passion she arouses passes over and blends with a religious love—thus symbolizing the fusion between the sexual and the religious that *The Brothers Karamazov*, to a large degree, is about. She is, moreover, the point of intersection between the two primal, multivocal values of love and shame, in their universal and Russian specific meanings, that also orients *The Brothers Karamazov*. She incarnates Dmitri's riddle of fearful beauty that fuses opposites, where "the shores converge," not just of a symbolic Sodom and Madonna but the expanses of water between the shores of Sodom and Madonna. To repeat, she is the most liminal protagonist in *The Brothers Karamazov*, but also central and pivotal. Through Dostoevsky's brilliant structural ambiguity she is both one of the four ideological cornerstones of this epic novel, yet also, at another level, the half-submerged center around which the others gyrate, or, to recur to my initial metaphor, the central black of the Karamazovian ("black-tainted") kaleidoscope. She can cause homicidal and suicidal despair, but also ecstatic joy and hope, the only character whose redemption is unambiguous but who also redeems: just as Alyosha says, "You have restored my soul," so Dmitri says much later on: "I took all her soul into my soul and through her became a human being (*chelovek*)."¹⁵ The liminal cum central energy that Grushenka exudes in large part drives the story and incarnates its symbolism—the way the powers of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, lust and jealousy, drives our primal epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Friedrich 1978). All of which, if I may be permitted a one sentence cadenza, supports or at least suggests the interpretation that Grushenka, like the

¹⁴ Grushenka's claim during "Delirium" may mean that she has been chaste since her elopement, or chaste except for enforced sex with Kuzma, or chaste in the face of public opinion, the crowd in the tavern, etc. The same Dostoevskian ambiguities surround Dmitri's words about only kissing Grushenka's foot.

three legitimate brothers Karamazov,¹⁵ is not only like the protagonists in a psychological novel and similar to some in real life, but, beyond that, is a figure of mythological proportions, bigger than life, containing many contradictions, and giving us, the readers, some inkling of how to conceptualize life's questions.¹⁶

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¹⁵ As for Alyosha, most readers, taking the Dostoevskian bait, read him as saintly, naïve, virginal, even flat, the phenotypal Alyosha, while missing or misconstruing the genotypical or Karamazovian Alyosha—a sinner, impure and sexually covetous, whom Dostoevsky gives us intimations of often enough.

¹⁶ For their helpful comments on this paper, direct or indirect, thanks to Kathy Atlas, Robert and Pierre Cruz Bourgeois, Joan Friedrich, Clare Geiman, Peter LeQuire, Margaret Litvin, Katia Mitova, Dale Pesmen, Domnica Radulescu, James Rice, George Savitsky, Michael Shapiro, Abby Seiff, Lena Steiner, Janet Tucker and Diana Uramburu, and to the members of our wonderful course on *The Brothers Karamazov* (autumn 2005). Earlier versions were read at the Basic Program Conference on *The Brothers Karamazov* of the Graham School, University of Chicago (October 29, 2005), and the Plenary Session of the Slavic Forum, also of the University of Chicago, in honor of Anna Lisa Crone (April 8, 2006).

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*The Drunkards, or Crime and Punishment: Dostoevskii and the Emergence of a Russian Disease**

Apart from Dostoevskii's vision of the god-pleasing Russian people, recent research has also pointed to his skepticism vis-à-vis the people. Irene Masing-Delić points out the dangerous "religious temperament" that Dostoevskii (in his engagement with Pushkin's Pugachev texts) discovered among the Russian people and as whose root he regarded Russian sectarianism, especially the khlysty (flagellants) and the skopcy (self-castrators).¹ The self-destructive and self-castigating tendencies within these sects had, according to Dostoevskii, especially negative effects when combined with modern western ideas, such as socialism.² Masing-Delić bases her arguments predominantly on *The Idiot* and its sectarian characters Rogozhin, Ippolit Terent'ev, and Nastas'ia Filippovna. The present study places stronger emphasis on the material situation and the political usefulness of this alleged characteristic of the people. For its primary example the study draws on the excessive alcohol consumption, commonly considered a typical characteristic of the Russian national character. As with other issues, in the case of alcoholism, too, Dostoevskii shows signs of concern about and skepticism for the Russian people and tries to counteract it through specific countermeasures, which he delegates to the social elites. The moral quality of this saving measure, as well as its efficacy, however, is questioned in the present analysis as the representation of alcoholism and alcohol abuse in *Crime and Punishment*

* Transl. Hans J. Rindisbacher.

¹ Masing-Delić, I. 2006. The "Castrator" Rogozhin and the "Castrate" Smerdiakov: Incarnations of Dostoevskii's 'Devil-Bearing' People. *Dostoevsky Studies, New Series*, 10: 89–90.

² Masing-Delić, 2006, 89–91.

instead reveal the role canonical texts of nineteenth-century Russian literary realism played in the construction of the Russian people, the *ruskii narod*.³

Crime and Punishment presents in the figure of Marmeladov unquestionably Dostoevskii's most famous alcoholic, whose reasons for drinking are impressive. Marmeladov drinks neither from sorrow nor for pure pleasure but rather, as he assures the reader at the outset of the novel, for noble reasons.

“И чем более пью, тем более и чувствую. Для того и пью, что в питии сем сострадания и чувства ищу.”⁴ (15)

Alcohol provides Marmeladov with intense emotions; by drinking he hopes for pity. And with his hero, in fact on behalf of his hero, Dostoevskii, too, asks for compassion. Like the children of addicted parents – this insight is owed to Catherine MacGregor – the author protects his suffering creation, but the supposed support only promotes decay and pushes the alcoholism even further.⁵ The alcoholic is excused for his addiction, the addiction is declared harmless and justified. Dostoevskii, however, does not stop at the individual. Far beyond the figure of Marmeladov he sketches a society of drunkards, a community, in fact, that seems to constitute itself through drink – the Russian people. Even today the equation of Russianness and the joy of imbibing form one

³ This article has its origin in the context of my much broader study on *The Construction of 'Narod' in Russian Realism 1860-1880* (forthcoming in 2007) which focuses on the role of various authors, including ethnographers and writers of fictional prose in the shaping of the notion of “Russianness”. Through this perspective, which also informs this essay, Dostoevskii's work is seen sideways, as it were, embedded in the context of its time. Dostoevskii's personal ideas of the people, their fraternity, and unity play only a secondary role. Instead, the essay foregrounds the fact that despite such lofty, morally-tinged ideas, more trivial, yet socially and politically virulent phenomena are adduced for the construction of “the people”. On this point the essay does not contradict the most recent study of Dostoevskii's Russophilia (S. Hudspith, S. 2004. *Dostoevsky and the Idea of Russianness. A New Perspective on Unity and Brotherhood*. London: Routledge Courzon) but rather complements it in a specific, hitherto unelucidated and embarrassing aspect. The people appear less as the carrier of “humility,” “meekness,” and “self-sacrifice” (S.Hudspith, 2004, 129, 199), but as a conglomerate of socially and culturally heterogenous groups whose unity still remains to be constructed.

⁴ All references to *Crime and Punishment* are to the following edition and will be made with page numbers directly in the text: Dostoevskii, F. M. 1973. *Prestuplenie u nakazanie*. (Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridcati tomakh. Vol. 6.) Leningrad: Nauka.

⁵ MacGregor, C. 1994. *Codependency and Crime and Punishment*. In *Beyond the Pleasure Dome. Writing and Addiction from the Romantics*. Edited by S. Vice, M. Campbell, T. Armstrong. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 23–39.

of the most common clichés, and vodka is praised as the veritable soul of Russia.⁶ Dostoevskii, this is the thesis of this article, contributes in no small measure to this development. The following (re)reading of *Crime and Punishment* reveals how Dostoevskii turns the excessive alcohol consumption of the lower classes into a national characteristic while simultaneously obscuring the political-economic basis of Russian drinking.

In their comprehensive study on Russian nutritional habits Robert Smith and David Christian outline how, beginning in the sixteenth century, the original peasant drinks – beer, *braga*, mead – start to disappear from the market due to increasing restrictions on brewing rights.⁷ The accompanying establishment of state-controlled distilleries and *kabaki* serves the intended distribution of grain liquor for obvious gain. The distilling monopoly assures huge profits,⁸ which in 1840 already reach half the total tax income and climb in the course of the nineteenth century to breathtaking levels.⁹ Not even railroad revenues manage to push alcohol from its dominant position.¹⁰ Vodka becomes the state's main source of income; the people have to get drunk for the state to make money. In their most recent study on "Russian joys" and the link of "drinking and power in Russia" Irina Takala and Sonja Margolina can only confirm this fatal connection.¹¹ Even counter measures by the

⁶ The proximity of (Russian) soul and (Russian) alcohol is used, among others, by (foreign) travel agencies <<http://www.eastline.com/st.-petersburg-tour-vodka-culture.html>> (February 2007).

⁷ Smith, R. E. F., Christian, D. 1984. *Bread and Salt. A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. In *Domostroi*, "vino", spirit, is mentioned only in passing, whereas beer constitutes the main drink both for the master and the servants (1994. *The Domostroi*. Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible. Edited and Translated by C. J. Pouncy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press). A proprietor who cares about his estate has to keep an eye on the stable-hand, the house-keeper, the baker, and the brewer.

⁸ Regardless of whether it occurs by means of a direct state monopoly or indirect methods of leasing distilleries, or the carefully manipulated issue of sales rights and taxation, the state in the nineteenth century uses various methods of control and takes in large sums of money through all of them. Cf. the graph in Smith/Christian, 1984, 302, 306.

⁹ Cf. the graph in Smith/Christian, 1984, 302.

¹⁰ As can be gathered from a footnote in Smith/Christian, the fiscal importance of vodka survived even the year 1917 (Smith/Christian, 1984, 301).

¹¹ Takala, I. 2002. *Veseliie Rusi. Istoria alkogol'noi problemy v Rossii*. Sankt-Peterburg: Zhurnal "Neva"; Margolina, S. 2004. *Wodka. Trinken und Macht in Russland*. Berlin: wjs. Similar arguments can be found in Herlihy, P. 2002. *The Alcoholic Empire. Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and in the recently reprinted study by Dmitriev (written in 1911) on the connection between alcoholism and state income Dmitriev, V. K. 2001. *Kriticheskie issledovaniia o potreblenii alkogolia v Rossii*. Moskva:

Russian government – warnings, advocacy of abstinence – never lose sight of the fiscal nexus.¹² Damage is to be prevented, but drinking must continue!

“Thus, the government itself was probably the greatest obstacle to any serious temperance movement”¹³

As the social classes are not only distinct in the kinds of drink they prefer but even more so in the manner of imbibing, it is clear that the treasury profits mainly from the peasants. While the elite might enjoy their French wines within the given legal framework and in moderation, different rules apply to the lower class:

“the point of drinking was, after all, to get drunk.”¹⁴

Peasants do not drink moderately and regularly a glass of schnapps every night, instead they do so rarely – but with a vengeance. Brawls and sexual assaults are normal and relatively harmless consequences of the often collective drinking binges. However, even major riots cannot be ruled out. Drunks, especially when acting in groups, may well threaten the state, the upper class, the civilized and the rulers in general. Mary Douglas shows that liquids, “drinks”, in contrast to solid foods, the “meals”, have subversive qualities.¹⁵ An invitation “for a drink” implies a higher degree of unpredictability than an invitation for lunch. Douglas refers to contemporary North American society, but her findings also apply, perhaps even to a higher degree, to the Russian peasantry of the nineteenth century. Here people don’t meet “for a glass”, but “for buckets” and more than anything it is this unrestrained carousing that even today is considered a typical Russian trait.

Dostoevskii knows his people. But the poet of the Russian soul also knows, as shown by two essays from 1873, about the state income from alcohol, the political-economic necessity of the Russian mass

Russkaja panorama. On alcoholism in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union see also Segal, B. 1984. *Russian Drinking. Use and Abuse of Alcohol in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*. New Brunswick: Alcohol Research Documentation, Inc. and 1987. *The Drunken Society. Alcohol abuse and alcoholism in the Soviet Union*. New York: Hippocrene Books.

¹² Frank points to a “change in the manner of licensing drinking establishments, intended to combat the ravages of drunkenness, [that] had only served to make it more widespread; in April 1865 a special commission had been appointed to examine the law and recommend measures to restrain ‘the excessive (use of alcohol) among the people’”. Frank, J. 1995. *Dostoevsky. The Miraculous Years. 1865-1871*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 31.

¹³ Smith/Christian, 1984, 326.

¹⁴ Smith/Christian, 1984, 303.

¹⁵ Douglas, M. 1997. Deciphering a meal. In *Food and Culture. A Reader*. Edited by C. Counihan, P. van Esterik. New York, London: Routledge, 40–42.

inebriation.¹⁶ Even if, in the final analysis, Dostoevskii blames the Jews in their role as the tenants of the *kabaki* for the exploitation of the Russian peasantry,¹⁷ he nevertheless admits unambiguously:

“Чуть не половину теперешнего бюджета нашего оплачивает водка, то есть по-теперешнему народное пьянство и народный разврат, – стало быть, вся народная будущность. Мы, так сказать, будущностью нашею платим за наш величавый бюджет великой европейской страны. (...) Матери пьют, дети пьют, церкви пустеют, отцы разбойничают (...). Спросите лишь одну медицину: какое может родиться поколение от таких пьяниц?”¹⁸

A few years earlier, when working on *Crime and Punishment*, neither Russian reality nor Dostoevskii's perception of it were probably significantly different from 1873. Nevertheless, in his literary work, he draws different conclusions. He transforms alcohol consumption into inwardness, soul, and nature and links the peasants' drunkenness with the inebriated visions of intellectuals, thereby clearly participating in the creation of a national characteristic. The nation united in drunkenness hides the profit motif, the government alcohol tax as well as the maintenance of the social hierarchy. *Crime and Punishment*, originally to be titled *The Drunkards*, represents this strategy in exemplary fashion.¹⁹ In order to highlight this point I want to place the characters who are obviously consuming alcohol – Marmeladov, a number of peasants, and on occasion the painter Mikolka – at the center of the present inquiry and analyze their links, both metaphorical and situational, to the novel's main hero, Raskol'nikov.

Marmeladov ruins his whole family through his alcoholism. He drives his daughter from his first marriage into prostitution, his wife into despair, and his stepchildren into poverty. This rather inglorious biography is sweetened for the readers, thus resonating with the family's

¹⁶ Dostoevskii, F. M. 1980. *Mechty i grezy*. In *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridcati tomakh*. Vol. 21. Leningrad: Nauka, 91–96; Dostoevskii, F. M. 1980. *Pozhar v sele Izmailove*. In *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridcati tomakh*. Vol. 21. Leningrad: Nauka, 142–144.

¹⁷ Dostoevskii, XXI, 1980, 94–95, 144.

¹⁸ Dostoevskii, XXI, 1980, 94.

¹⁹ In a letter to his publisher Kraevsky in June 1864, Dostoevskii described his planned novel with the words “*Роман мой называется «Пьяненькие» и будет в связи с теперешним вопросом о пьянстве. Разбирается не только вопрос, но представляются и все его разветвления, преимущественно картины семейств, воспитание детей в этой обстановке и проч. и проч.*” (cited by Opol'skaja, L. D. “*Istorija sozdaniia romana*” in: Dostoevskij, F. M. 1970. *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. Moskva: Nauka, 681). Yet, by phrasing the “problem” in this manner, it was transformed into a weakness that merely asked for pity and forgiveness.

name, and pushed closer to the readers' hearts.²⁰ Several strategies of sweetening are pursued. Dostoevskii gives his hero room for a personal speech which, as it appears in the second chapter of part one, can be interpreted as the opening and thematic prelude of the novel as a whole, including its central question of crime and punishment.

Да! меня жалеть не за что! Меня распяв надо, распять на кресте, а не жалеть! Но распни, судия, распни и, распяв, пожалей его! (...) Думаешь ли ты, продавец, что этот полуштоф твой мне в сласть пошел? Скорби, скорби искал я на дне его, скорби и слез, и вкусил, и обрел; а пожалеет нас тот, кто всех пожалел (...). И когда уже кончит над всеми, тогда возглаголет и нам: «Выходите, скажет, и вы! Выходите пьяненькие, выходите слабенькие, выходите соромники!». (20–21)

Marmeladov's pathetic declaration follows the typical logic of an alcoholic and might, at first, be read as an ironic authorial reference to Russian everyday life. Who does not like to anticipate God's future mercy in order to sin all the more freely in the earthly present? Yet, Dostoevskii stands by his hero and the further course of events justifies Marmeladov.²¹ His behavior does create suffering, but this is compensated and sublated by his own suffering. Alcoholism is both crime and punishment, a crossroad promising the drunken hero redemption. Marmeladov rejoices in the corporeal punishment at the hands of his wife; ("таковые побои не только не в боль, но и в наслаждение бывают", 22), his transgression seems to serve as a necessary cause of his rejoicing or, with regard to etymology, of the sweetening.²² This connection does not necessarily apply to all violations of the law. In *Crime and Punishment*, however, it does link drunkenness and murder, as disparate as these infractions are, and it does link Marmeladov and Raskol'nikov.

Marmeladov perishes early but Dostoevskii grants his hero and through him, drinking, absolution. Marmeladov has time to publicly

²⁰ On Dostoevskii's allusive naming, see Toporov, V. N. 1973. О структуре романа Достоевского в связи с архаичными схематическими мифологическими мышлениями. (Преступление и наказание) In *Structure of Texts and Semiotics of Culture*. Edited by J. van der Eng, M. Grygar. The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 254–256.

²¹ As we learn from Jeffrey Brooks's article "How Tolstoevskii Pleasured Readers and Rewrote a Russian Myth" (*Slavic Review*, Fall 2005, 538–559), "some of Russia's most creative minds have expressed outrage at how Dostoevskii and Tolstoi framed their novels with an ideological message" (558). The sentimental portrayal of Marmeladov, for instance, was met with harsh criticism by Nabokov who denounced Dostoevskii's anti-western "Brotherhood-Christ-Russia" as a misleading road for Russia's future. (Nabokov, V. 1981. *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. by Fredson Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 97; cited by J. Brooks, 2005, 558.)

²² The Russian word for enjoyment – *naslazhdenie* – has its root in *sweet* – *sladko*.

regret his deeds and beg his wife and daughter for forgiveness. The fact that Katerina Ivanovna's forgiveness remains ambiguous only increases the readers' compassion. We are supposed to empathize with Marmeladov, allowed to mourn him despite – or perhaps precisely because – of his starving family. The author skilfully solves the question of motifs. Why would a family man drink, a public official, well connected, a man with a sense of responsibility? Dostoevskii's answer, uttered through several characters, is simple: Marmeladov has an *unfortunate weakness*, *несчастливая слабость*. (144, 145, 250, 296). With this answer, alcohol consumption is grounded in human nature, in the psyche, while the connection of drink, work, and wages finds no room in Dostoevskii's work.²³ Marmeladov misses his last professional chance because he suddenly, out of the blue, takes up drinking again. Drinking prevents work rather than emerging as a consequence of the very working conditions. Dostoevskii isolates drinking from its economic function and instead eyes the aspect of addiction.²⁴ This perspective necessarily focuses on the middle class. Addicts, as a rule, are members of the middle class; the rabble may spontaneously and aimlessly get drunk but cannot afford addiction. Accordingly, alcohol problems become family problems, and, hence, Marmeladov's family turns on the most bourgeois of questions, the question of morals.²⁵ Tolstoi argues similarly in his 1899 article, “Для чего люди одурманиваются?”²⁶ He discusses the problem of alcohol and tobacco consumption exclusively from a moral perspective, grants drinkers – and himself – a particularly highly developed sense of emotion, and appeals to the conscience of an explicitly middle and upper class readership.²⁷ Social rank, addiction, emotion, and

²³ This characterization blocks the road to the acceptance of “individual responsibility” as a prerequisite for the functioning of a civil society. In the 1860s, a time of transition on the road to a more liberal society, Russia's emerging new reader, equipped “with public feelings, thoughts, interests, and the desire to think about public issues, learning what he wished to know” (observed by the critic Shelgunov, quoted in Frolova, I. I. ed. 1991. *Kniga v Rossii*, 1861-1881, Moscow: Kniga, 76) was guided by Dostoevskii to questions of redemption and forgiveness instead of an analysis of the economic and socio-political conditions.

²⁴ One of the constants in Dostoevskii's oeuvre is the low importance of work; his characters only rarely pursue regular paid jobs.

²⁵ General Ivolgin in *The Idiot* is another example of this bourgeois, ruined, yet good-natured type of alcoholic.

²⁶ Tolstoi, L. N. 1936. *Dlia chego liudi odurmanivaiutsia?* In *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vol. 27. Moskva: Gos. izd. khudozhestvennoj literatury, 269–285.

²⁷ See Tolstoj, XXVII, 1936, 283–284. Whereas the (sober) average citizen does not even realize the contradictions between what is and what should be, the emotionally sensitive human being reacts through the consumption of drugs to his inability to change the inadequate reality (271–272, 277). In this light, drinking, despite all criticism, appears as a distinction, an

morals are closely linked. Dostoevskii's representation of alcohol issues as a question of addiction consequently evokes the readers' compassion and thus constitutes an ideal strategy of redemption, which not only fuels the drinking of all the Marmeladovs – for without any notorious drunks there would be nothing to regret – but also covers up the state-run alcohol business.²⁸ In this way alcoholism emerges literally out of nowhere, addiction overpowers people, and the questions of economic and social control and individual responsibility vanish. Addicts are declared helpless victims in the grip of a mental phenomenon that, from Svidrigailov's perspective, rages among all Russians, in fact constitutes a profound Russian trait:

Русские люди вообще широкие люди, Авдотья Романовна, широкие как их земля, и чрезвычайно склонны к фантастическому, к беспорядочному; но беда быть широким без особенной гениальности. (378)

A tendency toward the fantastic and chaotic, with alcoholism one of its variations, characterizes nearly all the main figures in *Crime and Punishment*. There is repeated mention of their excessive nature, yet only a few seem short on genius.²⁹ Raskol'nikov, who takes over from the drunks, among them Marmeladov, is one who suffers this torture.³⁰

Raskol'nikov and Marmeladov are situationally tied to each other: after murdering the usurer Alena Ivanovna, Raskol'nikov roams the streets absentmindedly, and only a coachman's whip saves him from

indicator of inner greatness.

²⁸ MacGregor convincingly points out the heroic roles of children, especially the oldest child, in the families of alcoholics. However, she construes Sonia's failed attempt to save Marmeladov to signal the *author's* critical attitude vis-a-vis strategies of redemption (MacGregor, 1994, 27, 32). I disagree with this, for beyond the plot, which is MacGregor's main focus, the representation of the topic of *addiction* (and thus an individual and family problem) has to be analyzed, together with the tendentially sentimental *representation* of the alcoholic Marmeladov.

²⁹ Even the city of St. Petersburg is fantastic. See Toporov, 1973, 214, 276-78. The historical and national dimension of this claim is not addressed by Toporov. But Petersburg, as the realization of a mad idea – or the work of a genius – stands, more than any other place, in close connection with Raskol'nikov's crime. The city's founding can be understood, through Dostoevskii, as an exceedingly eccentric, but truly Russian, even if questionable, deed.

³⁰ The relevance of the topic of alcoholism in *Crime and Punishment* and the affinity between Raskol'nikov and intoxication is confirmed, not lastly, in Charles Jackson's reading of Dostoevskii. The alcoholic Don Birnam, the hero of Jackson's novel *The Lost Weekend* receives the murderer Raskol'nikov's inheritance. I owe this reference to Horst-Jürgen Gerigk, who traced it in his book *Die Russen in Amerika* (Gerigk, H.-J. 1995, 150-156.) In the eponymous movie made after the Jackson novel by Billy Wilder, however, the Dostoevskii trace is lost. I will come back to the incompatibility of the desire to kill and the craving for alcohol, which may be based on social differentiation.

being run over (89). Marmeladov, drunk, is hit by a coach and dies, thus preparing Raskol'nikov's penance and redemption (136).³¹ The type of accident, the coachmen's invective, the compassion of the passers-by, but above all the psychic states of the heroes are set parallel. The coachman interprets Raskol'nikov's derangement as a provocation and pretended drunkenness:

– Известно, пьяным представится да нарочно и лезет под колеса; а ты за ним отвечай. (89)

But there is no deception here. Rather, the similarity of alcohol-induced delirium and impaired consciousness can be understood as a basic motif of the novel.³² It manifests itself at all textual levels, notably in plot and metaphor. Drunkenness, insanity and disease merge seamlessly (35, 70–71, 75, 83, 135, 253, 254, 265–67, 275), emerging as synonymous concepts, provoking equivalent actions. Especially average citizens think Raskol'nikov is drunk – “Многие принимали его за пьяного” (35) – and Raskol'nikov, in turn, takes mental disturbances to be ordinary. And it is in the ordinary where they reconcile. Raskol'nikov himself takes the view that mental impairment, lowered willpower, and infantile-phenomenal thoughtlessness are among the preconditions for crimes. “Ordinary” murderers, from whom he wants to distance himself, act rashly and deliriously. To this mental impairment, that persists for a while even after the deed and causes the criminal to commit errors, is owed the high rate of solved crimes (58–59.).³³ Dostoevskii takes his hero's theory to heart, questions it, and exposes it – in a formalist vein.³⁴

³¹ Beyond this, the two scenes are connected to the *drunken* peasants who are sitting on a horse-drawn cart in the first of Raskol'nikov's dreams. More on this dream below. Snodgrass points to the motif of the cart, which enters the dream as the previous day's concrete material (Snodgrass, W. D. 1961. *Crime and Punishment: The Mare-Beating Episode*. In *Crime and Punishment and the Critics*. Edited by E. Wasiolek. San Francisco: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 91). The drunkenness that also closely ties the dream to the previous day's events, is not thematized.

³² This similarity generates a totality (tsel'nost') of its own, noted by Hudspith as a reflex of Dostoevskii's slavophile thinking. That the “organic unity” of the people (Hudspith, 2004, 6–7) is realized in the state of drunkenness, however, was probably not a part of slavophile ideology.

³³ The investigating judge, Porfirii, also knows about this claim, from Raskol'nikov's published article, and interprets his juvenile carelessness and the sickness of his subject accordingly (198).

³⁴ The reader recognizes this strategy as authoritarian and authorial. It clearly transcends the character's horizon. Another latent break in fictionality surfaces in the ‘testing’ of Raskol'nikov, which, in turn, points to the real instigator of the ‘tests’ and ‘deeds.’

From the very beginning of the novel Raskol'nikov is placed in proximity of drinkers. He goes to a pub, drinks a beer that shows some effect, runs into Marmeladov and later a drunk prostitute.³⁵ Through his very environment he seems prepared for his crime, transposed into a state of exaltation. After the deed, while lying sick in his room, drunken bawling repeatedly reaches his ear (70–71, 74). This acoustic proximity of the sick man and the noisy rabble pouring out of a pub into the street is not accidental. It is merely the symptom of a closer tie.³⁶ Raskol'nikov's disease demonstrates, in accordance with his own theory, a failing on his part, in fact declaring him to be a "normal" criminal and further, in accordance with Svidrigailov's thesis, an average Russian, without genius and hardly more than the usual inclination toward the unreal and the chaotic. His Russian character is in evidence again later. He makes one mistake after another, mixes with the people, acts hysterically, even confesses his crime, provocatively, in a pub (128). The intelligentsia and the people come perilously close and the double murder by the student can easily be classified as a variant of the unruly rabble's goings-on. To put it differently: Madness and drunkenness are equal manifestations of Russianness³⁷ and provide equal motivation for often unplanned brutal action. This is the essence of the often veiled, but never eradicated difference between the *actual* and the *metaphorical* meaning of the drunk.³⁸ Through his murder of Lizaveta, Raskol'nikov ties himself

³⁵ Tolstoi is among the few who even noticed this glass of beer. Long before devising the murder plan, Tolstoi claims, Raskol'nikov deprived himself of the possibility of a clear solution of his personal problems by imbibing a drug. A beer, according to Tolstoi, lowers a person's threshold of moral resistance and brings out his animal nature, including murderous ideas. (Tolstoj, XXVII, 1936, 280: "Вопросы эти решались (...), когда он не действовал, а только мыслил (...). И вот тогда-то бывает особенно важна (...) наибольшая ясность мысли, и вот тогда-то один стакан пива, одна выкуренная папироска могут помешать решению вопроса, отдалить это решение, могут заглушить голос совести, содействовать решению вопроса в пользу низшей животной природы, как это было с Раскольниковым")

³⁶ Toporov, too, points out that all important information in *Crime and Punishment* is passed on through hearing, not vision: "все основное именно услышанно (непосредственно или через молву, слухи), а не увиденно" (Toporov, 1973, 249). Following Hudspith, one might add that Raskol'nikov's gradual drawing closer to the people is expressed in his very lack of interest in the stolen valuables, especially in the usurer's money (Hudspith, 2004, 93–94).

³⁷ The closeness of drunkenness, madness, and disease have long been discussed as central to Dostoevskii's "Politics of Salvation" (Howe, I. "Dostoevsky: The Politics of Salvation", in: René Wellek, ed., *Dostoevsky*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1962, 53–70).

³⁸ Derrida's accurate statement, "Tout devenant métaphorique, il n'y a plus de sens propre et donc plus de métaphore" applies here in reverse: as long as not everything is metaphorical, there still is sense. Even if 'actual' drunkenness is part of fiction and therefore metaphorical, the status of the two phenomena can be clearly distinguished (Derrida, J. 1972. *La*

closely to the lower classes; he follows in the footsteps of the drunken peasants.³⁹

The peasantry is rarely Dostoevskii's central (literary) theme and its appearance in *Crime and Punishment* is, apart from the epilogue, limited to one scene. This is Raskol'nikov's first dream, triggered by a glass of vodka, in which drunken peasants beat a horse to death. Despite its brevity and its mediated, doubly fictional status, it carries far-reaching meaning for the novel. It encompasses the *ur*-form of the crime and anticipates all further misdeeds, especially Raskol'nikov's murders. Even the hero himself understands this after he wakes up (50). But the immediate solution of the riddle hardly mitigates the horror of the dream's content. Despite all the blows, the emaciated horse is unable to pull the heavy brewery cart, it simply cannot do it, the peasants' ire rises, they thrash the animal with heavy objects, an ax, a pole, only to kill it in a final outburst. Dostoevskii casts a haunting glance into the abyss of the human soul, and Norbert Elias's thesis – fully laid out in *The Civilizing Process* – finds corroboration⁴⁰: in the psyche of civilized man lurks the barbarism of his primitive forebears and sometimes even the barbarism of his drive-determined social contemporaries. Although dreams, according to psychoanalytic theory, characterize primarily the dreamer, here Raskol'nikov and, to some extent the author, Dostoevskii nevertheless provides a reference to the place and the people who, in Russia, easily get out of control or are perhaps never under control in the first place. He

dissémination. Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 290).

³⁹ In his comparison of *Crime and Punishment* and *The Lost Weekend*, Gerigk points, among other things, to the scene where Don Birnam lets pass an opportunity for the murder and recognizes that an alcoholic is unable to commit murder (Gerigk, 1995, 154). "He felt like an idiot. His taste was offended, his sense of the fitness of things, his deepest intelligence. For once, the foolish psychiatrist had been right. The drunk will go to any length to get his desperately needed drink. Any. But *not* that far." (Jackson, C. 1948. *The Lost Weekend*. New York: Random House, 237). Thus Don Birnam, in his inability to kill, inherits from – as Gerigk also suggests – the addict Marmeladov instead of Raskol'nikov. Neither Marmeladov nor Birnam are capable of a crime. Jackson's focus is consistently on alcoholism and therefore on the middle class. He consciously keeps a distance from the national question that Dostoevskii pursues. Raskol'nikov's intoxication and his national task, transcending social classes, looks rather different. More than anything else the hero's mental derangement forms the bridge to the spontaneous excessive drinking of the people. The unity of the intelligentsia and the peasants is the result of a reckless transgression of moral (and physical) borders. In contrast, the intellectual Don Birnam is fully aware of this border; he internalized it; his addiction is an individual or, at the most, a class specific phenomenon, like taste ("his taste was offended"). The consumption of alcohol neither links him intimately with the riff-raff nor does it appear in this representation as a typical American characteristic.

⁴⁰ Elias, N. 1997. *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*. 2 vols. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

proceeds similarly in *Notes from the House of the Dead*. The only description of the crime, the internal narrative “Akul’ka’s Husband,” is secretly overheard by the nobleman narrator Gorianchikov and appears to him like a feverish dream (“*бред*”).⁴¹ Raskol’nikov’s dream state is supposed to render even more questionable the reality of the Russian provinces. What applies to both cases, however, is that Dostoevskii, for once, does not rouse any pity for the perpetrators and deviates in the case in *Crime and Punishment* from his lenient attitude vis-à-vis alcoholics. Pity is only owed the horse. The focalization assures solidarity with the victim, and the reader follows the glance of the horrified observer, the boy Rodion Raskol’nikov, who finally embraces the dead animal.

We will forgo a detailed psychoanalytical interpretation,⁴² but it must be remembered that the dream does not only seem to reproduce important childhood sexual desires and fears but also recalls the murder of Dostoevskii’s father by his own serfs.⁴³ It is rare, in fact only in this passage, that the father figure and the peasants appear jointly. Regardless

⁴¹ Dostoevskii, F. M. 1972. *Zapiski iz Mertvogo doma*. (Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridcati tomakh. Vol. 4.) Leningrad: Nauka, 165.

⁴² The dream offers rewarding material for psychoanalytical readings, especially as Raskol’nikov’s father – for the only time – appears in it. Freud himself pursued the topic of patricide in Dostoevskii. (Freud, S. 1963. Dostojewski und die Vätertötung. In *Das Unheimliche. Aufsätze zur Literatur*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 85–105.) In the wake of Freud’s inquiry, which primarily focused on *The Brothers Karamazov*, all of Dostoevskii’s work, but especially Raskol’nikov’s dreams, drew attention. His first dream, additionally, can be linked to Freud’s reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s story “The Sandman” (See Freud, S. 1963. *Das Unheimliche*. In *Das Unheimliche. Aufsätze zur Literatur*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 5–84). Both for Dostoevskii and Hoffmann, the loss of eyesight plays an important role, interpreted by Freud as the fear of castration. Further examples of psychoanalytical readings are found in Kanzer, M. 1948. Dostoevsky’s Matricidal Impulses. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 35: 115–125; Florance, E. 1955. The Neurosis of Raskolnikov: A Study in Incest and Murder. *Archives of Criminal Psychodynamics*, 1: 344–396; Snodgrass, W. 1960. Crime for Punishment: The Tenor of Part One. *The Hudson Review*, 13: 202–253; Lower, R. 1969. On Raskolnikov’s Dreams in *Crime and Punishment*. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 17: 728–742; Kiremidjian, D. 1976. *Crime and Punishment*. Matricide and the Woman Question. *American Imago*, 33: 403–433; Wilson, R. 1976. Raskolnikov’s Dream in *Crime and Punishment*. *Literature and Psychology*, 26 (4): 159–166; Wasiolek, E. 1988. Raskolnikov’s Motives: Love and Murder. In *Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment*. Edited by H. Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 11–25; Cox, G. 1990. *Crime and Punishment: A Mind to Murder*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

⁴³ Kloss, for one, reads the dream as a first manifestation of scopophilia and claims that the observation of parental sexuality by the child, experienced as a shock, underlies all of Raskol’nikov’s dreams (Kloss, R. J. 1996. Raskolnikov’s Dreams in *Crime and Punishment*: The Common Link. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 17 (1–2): 125–139). This interpretation, as exemplified in the first dream, correlates well with the horrified glance of a ‘civilized’ person at the pleasures of a foreign, less ‘civilized’ social class.

of how one assesses the murder of (Dostoevskii's) father – as a mere rumour, a directed slander, or an incontestable fact, the thesis of the crime was known to the son, Fedor Mikhailovich.⁴⁴ Alcohol and brutality played a prominent role both in the life and the rumoured murder of Dr. Dostoevskii, in fact, they constituted the very points of connection between him and the peasantry.

The hypothesis of the murder of the father is supplemented by a second autobiographical source. On his trip to St. Petersburg, the horrified student Dostoevskii saw a drunken gendarme, coming straight from a pub, maltreating a coachman who, in turn, directs his anger against the horses.⁴⁵ Brutality and the consumption of alcohol are coupled, a logic that applies both to life and literary dream. However, Dostoevskii does not undertake any further search for causes. Reasons why peasants are drawn to the pubs, bawl, brawl, and stagger away as grotesque figures – images Raskol'nikov remembers – are left to speculation. The rabble simply drinks. It is the *consequences* of their urge that Dostoevskii investigates more closely, and it is here that a difference to Marmeladov emerges: the peasants' drunkenness creates a vortex that cannot be stopped even by pointing out its un-Christian-like nature.

– Да что на тебе креста, что ли, нет, леший! – кричит один старик из толпы. (48)

– Ну и впрямь, знать, креста на тебе нет! – кричат из толпы уже многие голоса. (49)

The peasants under their leader Mikolka explicitly deviate from the path of the Cross. Dostoevskii delegates the assignment: Raskol'nikov must take up the drunkards' succession. His crimes, especially the second murder, Lizaveta's, is a striking "realization" of the dream, even if the roles of victim and perpetrator are reversed.⁴⁶ Whereas the child and his fear of drunks is reincarnated in Lizaveta, the student Raskol'nikov repeats under the influence of madness and sickness the barbarity of his peasant forebears.⁴⁷ He succumbs to the murderous vortex. But Raskol'nikov, whose confused consciousness mirrors the alcoholism and

⁴⁴ Frank, J. 1976. *Dostoevskii: The Seeds of Revolt 1821-1849*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 85-89; Kjetsaa, G. 1986. *Dostojewskij. Sträfling – Spieler – Dichterstürst*. Gernsbach: Casimir Katz Verlag, 43-53.

⁴⁵ Frank, 1976, 70-71, Kjetsaa, 1986, 37-38.

⁴⁶ The murder weapon, an ax, and the stages of the crime (two-step), its vortical effect, the childishness and the madness of the participants are set in parallel fashion.

⁴⁷ On the change of roles, especially with a view to its sexual components, see also Kloss, 1996, 137.

brutality of the people and whose ego encompasses the rabble – as shown in the psychoanalytical analysis of the dreamer – accepts his guilt and banishment in the end. The structure of *Crime and Punishment*, especially in its parallelisms, suggests a reading, according to which Raskol'nikov takes upon himself the atonement for *all* murders, his own as well as others. In this interpretation, the Russian intelligentsia sacrifices itself for the people, releases and justifies even the rabble in its utter stupor. It is no accident that Dostoevskii needed this detour; the behavior of the Russian village population is simply too realistic, too horrific. The author thus shapes his personal horror at the behavior of others, of strangers. His investigating judge, Porfirii, is familiar with this strangeness, too:⁴⁸

Да ведь там (в глубине отечества, А. З.) мужики живут, настоящие, посконные, русские; этак ведь современно-то развитый человек скорее острог предпочтет, чем с такими иностранцами, как мужички наши, жить, же-хе! (262)

The strategy of representing the murder of the horse as a dream, the transference of the drinkers into the psyche of the intelligentsia, and the rabble's redemption by the equally irrational but sober intellectuals can be understood through Elias as a skilful psychologizing and civilizing of the masses or, with Nietzsche, as the Apollonian dressing-up of the Dionysian chaotic masses.⁴⁹ It is only a dream, after all; the repressed emerges briefly from the depths of the psyche and disappears again; and the readership identifies more easily with the confused but Apollonian and *individually shaped* theories of a student. Moreover, there are in *Crime and Punishment* some only *slightly* drunk representatives of the people. In fact, Raskol'nikov's redemption – as well as the peasants' – is anticipated in a sacrifice that originates in the lower classes. Moral action – childlike, spontaneous, and altruistic – is carried out by a man from the people.

⁴⁸ Part of the foreignness lies in the fact that the participants rejoice in their despicable deeds, however one may interpret them. Kloss points in this context to the peasant woman who, in Raskol'nikov's first dream, happily sits on the cart, cracking nuts (Kloss, 1996, 131).

⁴⁹ Cf. Nietzsche, F. 1988. *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870–1873*. (Kritische Studienausgabe; Vol. 1.) Berlin, New York: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, de Gruyter, 9–156. It remains open if Nietzsche, himself a classical philologist and apologist for the musical origin of Greek tragedy, also would have praised *this* variant of the Dionysian, the brutal, drunken mob. In a later phase of his life, Nietzsche showed little appreciation of drunkenness among the people. Shortly before the full onset of his mental illness he hugged a maltreated cart horse in Turin. As a background for this act one often cites his reading of *Crime and Punishment* (Janz, C. P. 1981. *Friedrich Nietzsche. Biographie*. Vol. 3. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 35).

Through his very name the painter Nikolai, colloquially most often called Mikolai or Mikolka, is assigned a central role in Dostoevskii's novel. The owner – and murderer – of the horse is also named Mikolka, and the eponymous painter, hardly by accident emerges as his foil. He is, moreover, a member of the sect of the *raskol'niki*, mediating between the drunken peasants and the social outsiders, the dissenters. Originally from the countryside, from Riazan province, Nikolai too suffers from the Russian weakness for alcohol but according to his acquaintance, an innkeeper, drinks moderately: “А Миколой хоть не пьяница, а выпивает” (106). Due to this penchant, however, he falls under the suspicion of being a murderer. He pawns a box, containing earrings and precious stones that he has found at his workplace for liquor, without giving a thought to the origin of the earrings. They belonged to the usurer and were lost by Raskol'nikov on his escape – another sign of his dilettantism and ‘Russian mediocrity.’ Even naiveté unites. The earrings provoke a police report and at the end of three days of carefree drinking get Mikolka into trouble.

Пришел он туда (на постоялый двор, А. З.), снял с себя крест, серебряный, и попросил за крест шкалик. Дали. (107)

Although innocent, Mikolka sees his only way out in suicide. In his fear and despair he allows himself a last drink, thus trading his cross for booze. This short scene, redundant in the plot structure, emphasizes once again the affinity of Cross and booze while simultaneously stressing the irreconcilability of a drunk and worldly life with a true Christian existence.⁵⁰ However, Mikolka is not in any serious danger. Religiously motivated, selfless and sacrificial, he is willing to shoulder another man's guilt and proclaims himself a murderer. This event serves to slow down the judicial process by sabotaging the investigating judge's psychological method, temporarily exonerating and purifying the main suspect. Raskol'nikov is irritated (273). Mikolka's action cannot be explained logically, it originates neither in reason nor calculation but is – and this

⁵⁰ Dostoevskii returns to this motif in his next novel, *The Idiot*, where he links drinking with the question of the humanity of God's son. Count Myshkin wears a cross that a drunkard sold him and reflects on a Holbein painting that depicts Christ's dead body in a strikingly realistic manner in the process of decomposition – a painting apt to make one lose one's belief. Dostoevskii, F. M. 1973. *Idiot*. (Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridcati tomach. Vol. 8). Leningrad: Nauka, 182–183). Myshkin is Mikolka's successor, as it were, and, like him, has the status of a holy fool, as Harriet Murav has shown. See the chapters “*Crime and Punishment: Psychology on Trial*” and “*The Idiot and the Problem of Recognition*” in Murav, H. 1992. *Holy Foolishness. Dostoevskii's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 51–98.

comes hardly as a surprise – a fantastic and thus truly Russian act, typical for a childlike people, as yet untamed, childlike even in its manner of drinking. Porfirii makes the point:

А насчет Миколки угодно ли вам знать, что это за сюжет (...)? Сердце имеет; фантаст. Он и петь, он и плясать (...) и хохотать, (...) и пьянствовать до бесчувствия, не то что б от разврата, а так, полосами, когда напоят, по-детски еще. (...) Миколка хочет «страдание принять» или вроде того (...) Что, не допускаете, что ли, чтоб из такого народа выходили люди фантастические? Да сплошь! (347–348)

It is hardly surprising that the instructions for Raskol'nikov, as which Mikolka's confession can be understood, presume a "normal" drinker, for even normalcy contains a fantastic potential: drinking oneself to oblivion or accepting suffering. Raskol'nikov's crime is a "fantastic thing" too, "*тут дело фантастическое*" (348). The people or, more accurately, the nation expresses itself at all social levels in fantastic actions, one of which is drinking. Inversely, alcoholism can be understood as a necessary aspect of Russianness. *Crime and Punishment* ascribes drunkenness across the board to peasants, civil servants, craftsmen and students, old believers as well as the orthodox, thereby making a good argument for the original title, *The Drunkards*. Mikolka's intellectual twin, the occasional drinker Razumikhin – "*Путь он мог до бесконечности, но мог и совсем не путь*" (44) – shows solidarity with Raskol'nikov and even falls in love while drunk. This kind of drunkenness, occasional drunkenness, goes hand in hand with sacrifice and love, salvation and redemption.⁵¹ But as a victim requires a perpetrator, a punishment a crime, and no pity emerges where there is no suffering, one may safely consider the brutal, drunken peasants in Raskol'nikov's dream as a prerequisite for their harmless brothers, the average fantastic drunkards.

As an explanatory model for national drinking and in order to return to the national tax revenue from alcohol by the Russian state I want to adduce in conclusion Foucault's thesis of the modern, self-reproducing penal system.⁵² Modern forms of control such as pity, morals, and psychology, do not, according to Foucault, improve murderers and drunks; on the contrary and counter to all superficial assurances, they actually produce them. The prison does not exist for the surveillance of the criminals; the inverse logic applies, and crimes must be committed for the prison, that is to say, power, to maintain itself. This logic is also found

⁵¹ Razumikhin's role as a mediator between emphatically rationalist and irrational worlds is stressed also by Hudspith (Hudspith, 2004, 150).

⁵² Foucault, M. 1975. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la Prison*. Paris: Gallimard.

in Dostoevskii's text, with power evidently at work as national power. In Russianness, Dostoevskii redeems drinkers and criminals. But the manoeuvre requires new perpetrators, new alcoholics and further fantastic subjects. Russianness – fantastic, willing to sacrifice, and pitiable – legitimizes and even promotes mob brutality; it legitimizes above all – without this ever being mentioned – a key source of the state's finances. Dostoevskii's construction of a national community veils the fact that the ruling class profits from the alcohol consumption of the lower classes. This "salvation" does not lead to the peasants' emancipation; on the contrary, it keeps the commoners in their traditional social place. In this sense, the creation of a drunken-fantastic nation must be interpreted as a modern form of control, as a deliberate virtual prison that serves not lastly to confirm social distinctions. By creating a national psyche, a mental phantasm capable of integrating extreme and occasional alcoholic excess, Dostoevskii provides his civilized readers with the possibility to accept even the more barbaric consequences of alcohol abuse. Moreover, childlike and unhappy drinkers such as Mikolka and Marmeladov form the majority. Childishness and unhappiness also characterize the people in the Siberian prisons. But how it got there and where drinking originates in the first place, remains *almost* a mystery.

Only the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* reveals fractures and contradictions in this national construct. The criminal idyll, which concludes Dostoevskii's text, and the main body, especially Raskol'nikov's first dream, glaringly contradict each other. In order for the author to integrate the peasants into his text for a second time, he has to give up, it seems, his own fantastic and, in this sense truly Russian, mode of narration. The representation of the people leads to aporie; allegedly Russian things are narrated in an "un-Russian" and not at all "drunken" manner. The ambivalent, marginal, and aporetic appearance of the peasants in *Crime and Punishment* subverts the unity of the text and in fact the unification of all Russians through the motif of drinking. This irritation, however, cannot change the dominant message of the text, that drunkenness is inextricably tied to Russianness. Dostoevskii openly supports a cliché and, more covertly, the state finances.⁵³

⁵³ Or, as J. Brooks (Brooks, 2005, 559) concluded: "Literature can reinforce structures of thought coextensive with an oppressive society, but in can also undermine them. [...] Dostoevskii in *Crime and Punishment* [...] evoked a mythology that had long served to reinforce the oppressive authority of tsarist rulers." In this, Dostoevskii succeeds splendidly as he satisfies even an average reader. His novel – with the exception of the epilogue – draws on the principles of the bandit story and thereby creates solidarity among his recipients and the (drunk, fantastic) murderer Raskol'nikov.

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Secret Designs in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*

I.

I shall begin by noting Dostoevsky's employment of nomenclature, much of the significance of which, however, is regrettably lost to a reader in translation. A non-Russian reader will be helped over this difficulty, though, by referring to Richard Peace's, *Dostoevsky: An Examination of the Major Novels*, in which there is so much useful exegesis of nomenclature. The reader will discover, for example, that in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) Raskolnikov's name is drawn from *raskolniki* meaning a "schismatic" or "heretic" (45);¹ that in *The Idiot* (1868-1869) Rogozhin's family name links him with the *Rogozhniki*, a sect of Old Believers in Moscow associated with the Rozhkoye Cemetery (Peace 86); and that Nastasya's patronymic, Filippovna, is the feminine form of Filippov, which also happens to be the name of the founder of the sect called the *Khlysty* or Flagellants (84). The reader will discover, too, that the name given to the Karamazov family in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880) conveys the meaning punishment (*kara*) daubed (*mazat*) (281 – 282).

Another researcher into Dostoevsky's work, Komarovich, notes, also, that *kara* is the Turkish word for "black" and that *maz* is the Russian word for "tar," an observation which may signify the two-fold "darkness" of the Karamazov character.²

The observations of both Peace and Komarovich appear equally valid for, just as the notion of "punishment-daubed" applies most fittingly to Dmitry Karamazov because it is he who is to be sentenced to penal

¹ See also, Johae, "Towards an Iconography of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*."

² Cited by Sandoz, who provides a useful comment on Komarovich's interpretation (38 – 39).

servitude for the crime of parricide committed by his half-brother, Smerdyakov, so too the dark aspect of the Karamazov name seems most appropriate to Ivan, the man described variously as a "riddle" (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* 267), a "sphinx" (695), and a "Freemason" (696), and whose silence or habit of keeping things dark leaves the path open for the murder of his father. Ivan's sphinx-like nature (a fact remarked on by Dmitry) is matched by Katerina's cat-like conduct (a fact again observed by Dmitry) (696), and it is therefore appropriate that these two should develop their liaison in secret and unbeknown to Dmitry. Again, it is Ivan's silence which prompts Dmitry to wonder if his brother is not a Freemason (696), the important point being, of course, that Freemasons are sworn to secrecy. Alyosha, the youngest of the Karamazov brothers, also has the same hunch concerning Ivan's association with Freemasonry (308), not because of his silence (Ivan has just recounted his legend of the Grand Inquisitor), but possibly because of his refusal to relinquish a redundant Euclidean geometry as the method of his metaphysical probe. As it was on Euclidean geometrical principles that the early Masons constructed their cathedrals (Mellor 27), a geometry which was later to be denoted by the letter G, and which in England came to be interpreted as "God" and then "Gnosis" (Mellor 236 – 237), so too the "Mason," Ivan, has constructed his metaphysic in Euclidean three-dimensional terms (*The Brothers Karamazov* 274), symbolizing it in such a way (i.e., in his legend of the Grand Inquisitor) as to render its meaning secret in the Masonic manner.

The important point here is not that Ivan may be an adherent of Freemasonry, but that his esoteric manner has the effect of separating him from his "ignorant" interlocutors, rather as the Pneumatics, the messengers of light of the old Gnostic religion, believed that they possessed an incommunicable knowledge of God, and as a consequence, felt themselves estranged from the nocturnal world of spiritually sleeping humanity. It is worth noting in this connection that just as the Pneumatics' disdain for the world manifested itself in either asceticism or libertinism conducted under the general policy of "all things are permitted" (Jonas 46), so too Ivan's enticement of Katerina (Dmitry's fiancée), his tampering with Lise (Alyosha's fiancée), and sanctioning of his father's murder are also directed under the principle "Everything is permitted," but now in a modern *agnostic* sense à la *Karamazov* (309).

The term "Freemason" as used by Dmitry and Alyosha about their brother, Ivan, is not meant to be taken literally but rather in the sense in which it was used at the time Dostoevsky was writing; that is, as

synonymous with one meaning of the word "romantic" which, according to a Russian critic writing in 1880 indicated the "presence of secret social endeavours of not conservative colouring in a person" (Qtd. in McLaughlin 441). Evidently, there was a political connotation in the word "Freemason," which no doubt had its origin in Russia in the truth-seeking ethos of the revolutionary Decembrist movement many of whose members had originally belonged to Masonic organizations.³

An important indicator of Ivan's revolutionary stance is his oblique acknowledgement of Voltaire, to whom he ironically refers as "an old sinner in the eighteenth century who delivered himself of the statement that if there were no God, it would have been necessary to invent him" (274). Ivan's debt to Voltaire is borne out by the satirical method of his "poem" entitled "The Grand Inquisitor" in which he has selected as the ostensible butt of his criticism an institution, the Roman Catholic Church, which was also a favourite target of the direct thrusts of the eighteenth-century *philosophes*, and of Voltaire in particular.

According to Ivan's devil, reminiscent of Voltaire in his quick-witted cynicism, Ivan is the author of another poem, "The Geological Upheaval" (763), a title which brings to mind the Lisbon earthquake and the final blow which that natural disaster struck Voltaire's doubtful Deism. It is possible, also, that Ivan Karamazov's Voltaireanism has been transmitted to the theological student, Rakitin, and thence to the thirteen-year-old Kolya Krasotkin, the latter of whom is not averse to quoting Voltaire in connection with his avowed Socialism (649). If this is the case, then Kolya's assertion (echoing Belinsky whose heroes were "Luther, Voltaire, the Encyclopedists, the Terrorists [and] Byron" (Qtd. in Sandoz 16) that Christ, were he alive, would join the revolutionaries,⁴ may also be Ivan's view, thus throwing light on the Christ figure of his poem.⁵

³ For a full explication of the role of Freemasonry in Russian revolutionary thinking, see Raeff.

⁴ Alyosha denies that Belinsky ever claimed that Christ would join the revolutionaries (650), but there is evidence enough in Belinsky's "Letter to Gogol" to confirm that Kolya is not misrepresenting Belinsky. (See Belinsky 539.)

⁵ A number of factors point to Belinsky as at least one of the models for Ivan Karamazov:

1. Belinsky's letter to Botkin of 1st March, 1841, bears a likeness to Ivan Karamazov's argument in "Rebellion." (See Sandoz 15 and *The Brothers Karamazov* 287.)
2. Belinsky had the slight physical deformity which Alyosha notices in his brother, Ivan, as he walks away from him: "[. . .] when looked at from behind, his right shoulder appeared to be lower than his left" (310). I am indebted to Christina Panteli for drawing my attention to this likeness.

Certain residual romantic traits, in addition to a Voltaireanism in keeping with the revolutionary ethos of such members of the Russian intelligentsia as Belinsky, Herzen (sometimes known as the Russian Voltaire),⁶ Petrashevsky and Chernyshevsky, may also be discerned in Ivan Karamazov's thinking (a point remarked on by the devil of his nightmare) (761): "I love some great human achievement," Ivan says to Alyosha, "in which perhaps I've lost faith long ago, but which from old habit my heart still reveres" (268 – 269). One is reminded here of the Underground Man's Schillerean leaning towards "the sublime and the beautiful," and his retractive scepticism concerning the value of romantic attitudes.⁷ In the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, however, Ivan's romantic aspiration is embodied in the figure of Christ in an unadulterated romantic form, his description of him (reminiscent of Blake's manner) leaving little doubt about the ideal nature of the silent visitor: "The sun of love burns in his heart, rays of Light, of Enlightenment, and of Power stream from his eyes and, pouring over the people, stir their hearts with responsive love" (291). The irresolvable dualistic aspect of Ivan's thinking, not always clearly enunciated in discussion with his co-protagonists, is expressed iconographically in the legend so that the youthful Christ (the ideal aspect of Ivan's romanticism) counteracted by the aged Inquisitor (the disenchanted aspect of Ivan's romanticism) emerges pictorially in the form of a diptych, the light side represented by the "Christ" and the dark by the Grand Inquisitor.⁸

It is worth noting in confirmation of my thesis that, in choosing Spain as the setting for his poem and the Inquisition and the autos-da-fe as the historical circumstance, Ivan is following the pattern of an English

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3. Belinsky's ill treatment at the hands of his father, and disdain of the family institution, is similar to Ivan Karamazov's neglect by his father and his consequent detachment from the family. (See Lampert, *Studies in Rebellion* 47.)
 4. Belinsky's championing of Voltaire is shared by Ivan Karamazov.
 5. Belinsky's statement: "Men are so insensate that they must forcibly be led to happiness!" (qtd. in Sandoz 16) agrees with the Grand Inquisitor's programme to which Ivan lends his support and which in any case he has himself devised in his legend. Sandoz remarks that Belinsky's words echo Rousseau's doctrine in *Du contrat social*: "It may be necessary to compel a man to be free" (Sandoz 16, note 24).
 6. Belinsky agrees with Marx that "the critique of religion is the presupposition of all critique." It is on this "strategic ground" that Ivan conducts his own critique. (See Sandoz 17).

⁶ See Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer* 1065; and Lampert, *Studies in Rebellion* 189 where Malardier describes Herzen at his funeral as "un Voltaire Russe."

⁷ For an account of Dostoevsky's early imbibing of Idealist thought, see Johae, "Retractive Imagery."

⁸ See Johae, "Idealism and the Dialectic in *The Brothers Karamazov*."

gothic novel such as Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* where the wanderer from the north is taken captive by the masters of the Inquisition and subjected to rigorous cross-examination. In his "poem," Ivan has maintained a characteristic of a number of novels of the gothic genre (e.g., *The Monk* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*); that is, the deep antagonism between a southern Europe steeped in an archaic Catholicism and a vigorous Protestant north, renewed in the nineteenth century by the potent force of Romanticism.⁹

To grasp the ideological significance of Ivan's employment of a "gothic" schema and to understand how it fits into the novel as a whole, we should remind ourselves that it is towards Europe that Ivan's aspirations are directed (269), that the events take place in 1866,¹⁰ at a time when Napoleon III was endeavouring to reassert the supremacy of the French nation with the Catholic world behind him, but that the novel was written between 1878 and 1880, after the Franco-Prussian conflagration and the rout of the French at Sedan. On the historical plane, the legend of the Grand Inquisitor represents a split in European society and the struggle for supremacy of splintered creeds, nations and, latterly, of classes. On the philosophical level, Ivan's poem expresses the irresolvable dualism of his intellectual probe and, in particular, his inability to reconcile the aspiration of freedom (Christ) and the necessity of authority (the Grand Inquisitor). In personal terms, the actual outcome of Ivan's dualism is a splitting of his mind with a consequent loss of power of self-determination. One is reminded here of the Russian word *raskol* meaning "split" and its elaboration into *Raskolniki*, the name given to the Old Believers, the schismatic sect arising out of the Church reforms instituted by the Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century. I do not mean to suggest here any direct connection between Ivan's dualistic thought, its schizophrenic consequences, and those who have separated themselves from the Orthodox Church on the ground of diversity of opinion, any more than I would wish to attribute Ivan's secrecy to an imbibing of the hidden tenets of Freemasonry. Rather, I am suggesting a *parallel* between Ivan's political radicalism and the rebellious posture of the schismatics epitomized by their search for truth in freedom. It is worth remarking here that Pobedonostsev, advisor to the Tsar, Alexander II, regarded the *Raskolniki* as more dangerous than the revolutionaries,¹¹ a

⁹ Romanticism as a major stream of thought vying for supremacy in nineteenth-century Europe is discussed interestingly by Bab.

¹⁰ 1866 is the date proposed by Grossman in *Dostoevsky* 586.

¹¹ See Zenkovsky 56.

comparison which establishes both groups as serious threats to Imperial hegemony.

I have earlier suggested that Ivan's legend of the Grand Inquisitor may have been devised in a spirit of Voltairean satire; that is, as a self-protective method of social criticism made under cover of an alien location and another epoch in which the names of personages under attack are substituted by surrogate nomenclature. If this is the case (and Ivan's penchant for Voltaire supports this notion), then the legend may actually represent Ivan's covert attack on the sinister authoritarianism of the Russian State, an attack similar in intention to that of the extremists of the *Raskolniki*--- *Stranniki* or "Wanderers"---in whose "gnostic" eyes the Russian State and Church were ruled by the Devil,¹² and with whom, therefore, there could be no dealing (hence, the silence of the wandering Christ in the face of the entrenched persuasions of the satanic Grand Inquisitor). Ivan's legend, therefore, may be structured on an heretical iconography; on, for example, the beliefs of the mystical sect called the *Khlysty* or "Flagellants" who knew themselves as the *Khrysty* or "Christs" because of their belief in the transmigration of Christ's soul into one or more of his elect.¹³ It is this dogma which may account for the "anachronistic" appearance of Christ in sixteenth-century Spain. It must be stressed, however, that heretical iconography is employed in the legend only as a model for a political argument having nothing to do with religious dogma as such. It is the separatist or "gnostic" element of *Khlysty* theology, especially, which lends itself to a paradigmatic representation of the anarchist and "agnostic" socio/political ideology of the revolutionaries, and which affords the camouflage for Ivan Karamazov's covert offensive upon the Russian establishment.

If Ivan cannot literally be seen as a member of the *Khlysty*, there is evidence to suggest that his half-brother and collaborator, Smerdyakov, has had direct contact with a mystical sect more extreme in its views and practice even than the *Khlysty*: the *Skoptsy* or "Castrates." We learn that while still a youth, Smerdyakov was sent by his father to Moscow (a centre of the *Skoptsy*) to learn the culinary arts, and that he returns looking "suddenly old, prematurely wrinkled, sallow-faced" and looking "like a castrate" (145). We learn also that he despises women and recoils at his father's suggestion that he should marry (146). His one woman friend is a neighbour, Maria Kondratyevna, whose patronym, as Richard Peace points out, derives from *kondratiy* which in turn brings to mind the

¹² See Sandoz 209, note 33.

¹³ See Peace 317, note 17, and Conybeare, Part 3, Chapter 1.

founder of the sect of the Castrates, Kondratii Selivanov. Peace, furthermore, notes that after the murder of his father, Smerdyakov takes up residence with Maria Kondratyevna living separately from her in a part of the house referred to as "the white hut." Peace goes on: "[. . .] white had particular importance for the Castrates who referred to themselves as 'The White Doves,' dressed in white, and called the process of castration itself 'whitening' (*ubeleniye*)" (262).

Dostoevsky's assignation of white to Smerdyakov runs directly counter to the semantic value of Karamazov (black tar), a contradiction which might lead one to suppose that this is the author's paradoxical way of signifying the relative innocence of the ill-treated underdog. However, the fact that Smerdyakov may himself be a "White Dove" draws attention to the indeterminate nature of Dostoevsky's symbols. A polyphony of voices and ideas annihilating a centred authorial presence (Bakhtin), militates against singular interpretations of symbols, a feature which would allow the dove, highly placed in Orthodox Church iconography, to retain its elevated position in an heretical order. In like manner, whiteness as an Orthodox symbol of innocence and purity has a similar value in the heretical symbology of the *Skoptsy*, with the difference that in practice spiritual choice is executed by the knife and not by the will. This notwithstanding, if the Castrates are associated in their own minds with whiteness, this does not prevent the peasants knowing them as the dark sect because of the suspect manner in which they express their beliefs. From this point of view, therefore, the symbolic value of the name Kara(black)maz(tar)ov is wholly fitting, and so, too, is the alternative value of the name---punishment-daubed---for in the eyes of the peasant, for whom fertility means so much, there could hardly be a greater punishment than the severance of the organ of procreation from the body.

II.

I propose now to introduce a third possible symbolic value of the name Karamazov into our discussion: Sandoz maintains that the name may also have its derivation in the medieval Jewish sect of the Kairites, known in Russia as *Karaima* (38). The name is derived from the Hebrew word, *qara*, meaning to read, and is intended to denote the movement's strict adherence to the Torah (as opposed to the Talmud or the oral tradition) as the sole source of genuine religious doctrine and practice.

We may note here a number of parallels between the beliefs and practice of the Kairites and those of the Old Believers in Russia. In the first place, both movements insisted that biblical texts were God-given and self-explanatory. Secondly, both movements stressed the importance of reading these texts and did not favour institutional exegesis (though this did not prevent them from quibbling). Thirdly, they both contested the authority of the priesthood; and finally, both movements were puritanical in outlook and inevitably carried their ascetic practices to dubious extremes.¹⁴

The question remains: could Dostoevsky have had such considerations in mind when naming the protagonist family of his novel? I believe so, because as an ex-convict in exile Dostoevsky had spent five years at Semipalatinsk where there was also a colony of the *Karaimi* (Sandoz 38). The derivation of the name of the sect from the Hebrew word meaning "to read" also reminds us of Ivan Karamazov's aptitude for study, the evidence for which is to be found in the elaborate intellectual content of his legend of the Grand Inquisitor.¹⁵ I have also suggested parallels between Ivan's radical and philosophical thought and the antagonistic position of the Old Believers towards the Russian establishment, a position similar to that of the Kairites who, like the Old Believers and nineteenth-century revolutionaries, were few in number and operated outside, and in opposition to, the mainstream of established thinking of their day.

There is, furthermore, a particular sequence of events in Dostoevsky's life which lends support to the "Jewishness" of the Karamazov name; this centers on the author's exchange of letters with Abraham Urija Kowner (1842 – 1909), a Jew originating from Vilna who had reproached Dostoevsky for expressing anti-semitic sentiments in his *Diary of a Writer* articles.¹⁶ Quite apart from the content of the letters, which will be examined shortly, it is remarkable how certain events of Kowner's life bear a correspondence to Raskolnikov's conduct and attitude in *Crime and Punishment*. Like Raskolnikov, Kowner was sentenced to a period of penal servitude in Siberia, but though his crime

¹⁴ In his account of prison life in Siberia, *Notes From the House of the Dead*, Dostoevsky expresses obvious respect for an Old Believer whom he encountered in prison (35 – 36). On the other hand, he makes plain the generally intolerant attitude of most of them. Dostoevsky's library contained much literature on the Old Believers. (See Sandoz 65.)

¹⁵ Sandoz's *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* attests to the intellectual complexity of Ivan's legend.

¹⁶ Dostoevsky answers Kowner's accusations in the *Diary* 637 ff.

was not murder (he defrauded a bank of 160,000 roubles),¹⁷ its motivation seems to have been marked by the same kind of dissenting attitude which characterizes Raskolnikov's approach to his crime. It is also worth remarking that the defense's description of the circumstances of Kowner's crime---his superficial imbibing of modern and extreme ideas, his penchant for theorizing at the expense of mature practice, his tenuous financial position in a city where unremitting poverty could be seen to co-exist with enormous wealth, and his own generosity which exacerbated his already precarious financial state---bear a remarkable similarity to the mitigating circumstances of Raskolnikov's crime to which the defense at his trial draws attention and which results in his being committed to the relatively light sentence of eight years penal servitude (*Crime and Punishment* 544 – 545).¹⁸

I am not here suggesting that Kowner had Dostoevsky's protagonist in mind when committing his crime, although it is likely that he knew his novel. Rather we think, like Grossman, that Kowner's mentor was the political radical Dimitry Pisarev for whom Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* was so crucial to the materialist persuasion of his thought.¹⁹ Kowner was likewise a convinced materialist and his adherence to Darwin is confirmed in one of his letters to Dostoevsky in which he rejects as inadequate the novelist's religious explanation of social and political problems (Grossman, *Beichte* 110 – 116). The congruence of Kowner's thought to those of Pisarev accounts for Rozanov²⁰ later calling him "The Jewish Pisarev" (Grossman, *Beichte* 219), a name which seems to have stuck, judging from a chapter of C.L. Zinnberg's book, published in St. Petersburg in 1915, *Die Geschichte der jüdischen Presse in Rußland in Zusammenhang mit der gesellschaftlichen Strömungen* (The History of the Jewish Press in Russia in Relation to Social Trends) entitled "A. Kowner, der Pisarewismus in der jüdischen Literatur" (A. Kowner: Pisarevism in Jewish Literature) (Grossman, *Beichte* 39). Certainly Kowner's diagnosis of the Jewish problem in Russia as one solely of poverty (Grossman, *Beichte* 50) is arrived at by employing the same social criteria as Pisarev for whom "The root of Raskolnikov's

¹⁷ Grossman, *Die Beichte Eines Juden in Briefen an Dostojewski* 73.

¹⁸ See Grossman, *Beichte*, Chapter 3, "Das Experiment Raskolnikoff," in which Kowner's case is considered in conjunction with *Crime and Punishment*.

¹⁹ See Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers* 300.

²⁰ Vasily Rozanov, who held an overtly conservative and anti-semitic view, married Appolinaria Suslova, the woman with whom Dostoevsky had an escapade on his first journey to Europe. She was the model for Polina in Dostoevsky's novel *The Gambler*.

illness was not in the brain but in the pocket."²¹ While it is possible that Dostoevsky knew of Kowner from his articles in *The Russian Word* (a journal to which Pisarev was also a contributor), it was Pisarev and not Kowner whom Dostoevsky had in mind in his characterization of Raskolnikov.²² It was to be more than ten years after the first publication of *Crime and Punishment* that a direct contact through exchange of letters was established between Kowner and Dostoevsky, and it was only with this exchange that the by-now-famous novelist came to draw directly on the ideas of his correspondent putting them into the mouth of his fictional character, Ivan Karamazov.

One of Kowner's letters written at the end of January, 1877, provoked by an article by Dostoevsky appearing in the December 1876 edition of *The Diary of a Writer* is crucial in this respect. In it Kowner takes exception to Dostoevsky's "arbitrary assertion"²³ concerning "the necessity and inevitability of a belief in the immortality of the soul" (Dostoevsky's words). Kowner insists that such fundamental problems as Dostoevsky has raised deserve to be argued "pro and contra" (Kowner's words), and he then proceeds to expound his own ideas drawing particularly on Darwin's theories in support of his own "contra" position.²⁴

Although in principle Dostoevsky did not agree with Kowner's view, his reply to his letter makes it clear that he was impressed by the serious thought his correspondent had obviously given to the question (Grossman, *Beichte* 17). In fact, so impressed was he that he gave the title "Pro and Contra," the dialectical axiom employed by Kowner, to Book Five of *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is in the fourth section of this book, entitled "Rebellion," that Kowner's ideas can be seen to form the kernel of Ivan Karamazov's famous metaphysical argument in which he ultimately returns his "ticket of admission" to God (287). The apostate "Jewish" aspect of the Karamazov intellect, therefore, is to be found especially in Ivan, because it is in his mind that an alien attitude of dissent, running counter to the mainstream of orthodox thinking, is nurtured. As such, it represents a threat (like the ideas of the Old Believers, the Freemasons, and the Socialists) to the espoused homogeneity of traditional Russian culture.

²¹ Quoted by Wellek in his "Introduction" to *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays* 2.

²² See Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers* 272–338.

²³ The section of Dostoevsky's article to which Kowner refers is entitled "Arbitrary Assertions." For a discussion of the article in its application to *The Brothers Karamazov*, see Jackson, "Last Stop."

²⁴ Kowner's letter is reproduced in full in Grossman, *Beichte* 110–116.

On the other side, the kind of “Jewishness” with which Dostoevsky remonstrates in *The Diary of a Writer* concerning the gathering economic power of Jewry²⁵ is primarily invested in the father, Fyodor Karamazov. We learn that at one time he has had a Jew as a business partner and that, in spite of his debauched life, he has always been successful in managing his business affairs (10). We learn also that in Odessa Fyodor has befriended a number of Jews and from them has “acquired a special knack for making money and amassing capital” (21). Apart from juxtaposing Fyodor’s inhumaneness with his “Jewish” propensity for making money, Dostoevsky further insinuates the “Jewish” nature of exploitation when he has Dmitry in his dire need sell his watch to a Jewish watch-maker (45).²⁶ It is in the fiction, therefore, as well as in the *Diary* articles, that there lies a justification for Kowner’s accusation concerning Dostoevsky’s placing of all exploiters under the heading of “Jews” (Grossman, *Beichte* 102).

III.

I propose now to introduce the nub of my argument by drawing attention to the fact that the Jewish sect of the *Karaimi*, Dostoevsky’s correspondent, Kowner, and the family Karamazov all bear names beginning with the letter K, a point which may seem to be of little consequence until it is realized with what frequency names beginning with K occur in the novel. I shall now proceed to enumerate them.²⁷ Apart from the Karamazov family, there are Katerina Verkhovtsev, Dmitry’s fiancée; Maria Kondratyevna, Smerdyakov’s “girl friend”; Grigory Kutusov, Dmitry’s surrogate father; Katerina Khokhlakov;²⁸ Kalганov, Miusov’s nephew; the merchant, Kuzma Samsonov, Grushenka’s protector; Kolya Krasotkin, the leader of the boys; Kartashov, another of the boys; Kolbasnikov, the boys’ classics master (644); Kostya, the seven-year-old son of the “abandoned” doctor’s wife, neighbours to the

²⁵ Dostoevsky’s disparaging references to Jews in *The Diary of a Writer* are numerous. The following page references illustrate the frequency: 105 – 106; 246; 248; 355; 370; 379; 484; 486; 488; 557; 643; 648; 650; 653; 664; 843; 1019.

²⁶ It is interesting to note that in *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikov overhears Alyona, the money lender, described as “Rich as a Jew” (83), and that it is with her that he pawns his father’s watch.

²⁷ Where it is intended to draw attention to a name beginning with the letter K, the letter will be underlined.

²⁸ Khokhlakov does not begin with K in the Cyrillic alphabet.

Krasotkins, and Katerina her maid who gives birth to an illegitimate child (609); Pavel Korneplodov, a “famous lawyer” whom Dmitry has consulted (435 – 436); and Ippolit Kirilovich, the assistant public prosecutor. The name Korovkin crops up in Ivan’s dream (758).

The question now arises: why did Dostoevsky give so many of his characters in *The Brothers Karamazov* names beginning with the letter K? I would posit the following: the letter K stands for “Kabbalah,” a word which in Hebrew means “to receive,”²⁹ but which in Russian connotes “something incomprehensible.” Put at its simplest, I am suggesting that the author has imbued his “K” characters with an inherently recondite aspect. The symbol, however, is merely an outward manifestation of a complex philosophical chain of ideas having their origin in the mystical Kabbalah, but reconstituted in the novel in an adulterated form of the nineteenth century. We do not know from which Kabbalistic source, if any, Dostoevsky drew for his novel although, judging from the contemporary significance which he gives to the letter K (a point to be discussed shortly), we think it likely that he had read the popular work, *The Key of the Mysteries*,³⁰ by Alphonse Louis Constant, but who used the Jewish pseudonym, Eliphas Lévi. The book, written in French and published between 1855 and 1865 with a wide circulation, could quite easily have been read by the Russian author during his visits to Europe between 1861 and 1871.³¹ The argument for Eliphas Lévi as a source is persuasive because so many facets of Lévi’s thinking appear to have found their way into Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Indeed, as F.I. Evnin has shown Raskolnikov’s theory of the “rights” of great men to be drawn from Napoleon III’s *History of Caesar*, so too, I am seeking to establish that Ivan Karamazov’s legend of the Grand Inquisitor draws many of its political features from the work of Eliphas Lévi, the man whose purpose was to capture Catholicism with his ideas, to persuade Louis Napoleon that he was “the chosen instrument of the Almighty,” and then to witness a revived “Catholic” world, led by Imperial France, once more a dominant political force on the European stage.³² Viewed in the context of the Balkan wars, Lévi’s initial political objective was to consolidate the alliance between Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Moslems (Turks) against what he called “the invasion of the

²⁹ Halevi, *The Way of the Kabbalah* 11.

³⁰ The modern scholar of Kabbalism, Gershom Scholem, maintains that Lévi was a charlatan (*Kabbalah* 203.)

³¹ Dostoevsky’s knowledge of the French language was good: one of his earliest literary undertakings (1844) was a translation into Russian of Balzac’s novel, *Eugénie Grandet*.

³² See Aleister Crowley’s introduction to *The Key of the Mysteries* 8.

barbarians and their brutalizing orthodoxy"; i.e., Russia (Lévi 53). When he speaks of "Catholics," however, he means least of all those of ultra-montane political conviction, but rather men like Voltaire, Napoleon (54), and Fénélon (62), names not usually invoked in support of a Catholic position. He does this to underpin his "heretical" belief, for not only does he variously describe himself as a "Kabbalist" (109), "Professor of Magic" (129), and "The Man of Science" (117), but he is also reputed to have been a sympathizer with Socialism (67, note 1), a political creed running directly counter to the Catholic faith to which he purported to adhere. What he is really proposing is an imperial takeover of the power invested in the Catholic Church, a proposal which in point of fact was foiled by the ultra-montane faction at the first Vatican Council of 1870 when the dogma of papal infallibility was inaugurated and Rome was once more assured of her central position in the Catholic world.

Although Lévi in his treatise makes it seem as though he is supporting the Catholic Church, he is in fact only proposing that his new system should adopt the hierarchy of authority which so effectively consolidated and preserved the institutions of the Catholic Church during her long history. With this in mind, we may better understand what Lévi means when he asks the question: "[D]o you know what the Catholicism of the future must be?" and replies: "It will be the dogma of the Gospel, tried like gold by the critical acid of Voltaire, and realized, in the Kingdom of the world, by the genius of the Christian Napoleon" (53 – 54). It will, in other words, be no Catholicism at all, but rather a political creed purporting a secular modernity but, like medieval Catholicism, maintained for practical purposes in an ethos of superstition. The terminology which Lévi employs---"the science of miracles" (147), "the object of faith [. . .] Mystery" (65), and "the Spirit of Truth [. . .] the spirit of force and of counsel" (58)---bears a remarkable similarity to the Grand Inquisitor's pragmatic principles of government based on "miracle, mystery and authority" (*The Brothers Karamazov* 301). Lévi, moreover, formulates a number of triple mottos such as Truth, Reason, Justice; Duty, Hierarchy, Society, which he insists must be understood before the revolutionary motto "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" can be taken into account (175 – 176). One is reminded here of Ivan Karamazov's initial support for the freedom symbolized in the Christ figure of his legend, and the swing of this support away from him towards the authoritarianism of the Grand Inquisitor.

It might well be remarked at this stage that Lévi's treatise has little to do with the Kabbalah. It only appears so because of the cryptic

language the writer employs to disguise the subversive nature of his ideology. He also uses an ostensible Kabbalistic rubric in, for example, the "Sketch of the Prophetic Theology of Numbers" (22), which in fact goes no way to disclosing any of the Kabbalistic secrets which the title purports to do. It is more than probable that Dostoevsky regarded Lévi as a charlatan, seeing in him a reflection of the same charlatanism as the man to whom the self-styled Kabbalist had wished to play double--the pseudo-Emperor, Napoleon III, whose lack of imperial capability was proven once and for all at the battle of Sedan.

Lévi's words concerning the nature of devils must surely have seemed to Dostoevsky an apt description of the man who had written them: "One makes devils with cast-off gods, and Satan is only so incoherent and so formless because he is made up of all the rags of ancient theogenies. He is a sphinx without a secret, the riddle without an answer, the mystery without truth, the absolute without reality and without light" (Lévi 23 – 24). Here is a fitting description of Ivan's devil ("I am the x in an indeterminate equation" [755]), and of Ivan himself for whom, in the words of Lévi again, "The devil is the giddiness of the intelligence stupefied by the irresolution of the heart" (160).

It is likely, then, that Dostoevsky had Lévi's suspect Kabbalah in mind when working out the tortuous cerebrations of such intellectuals as Ivan Karamazov and Kolya Krasotkin for whom, like Lévi, "Thought alone [. . .] reveals light" (Lévi 59), but for whom in fact thought on its own does not resolve anything. Their position is "gnostic";³³ a priority is placed on knowledge (in contradistinction to Father Zossima's "active love" [61]), which when attained often puts them in opposition to established thinking, whether on a personal moral plane or at a general political level. It is for this reason a knowledge which has to be kept a "guilty" secret, and runs counter to the open confession (and open society) advocated by Father Zossima: witness in the chapter entitled "An Inauspicious Meeting" the devious machinations of the group *inside* the monastery compared with the open-hearted confessions of those *outside* the monastery.

In the planned second volume of *The Brothers Karamazov* which Dostoevsky intended beginning in 1882, but which was prevented by his death in 1881, Alyosha Karamazov was to have transferred his allegiance from Father Zossima to his brother in the "gnostic" camp. He was to have

³³ Gnosticism and Kabbalism are not mutually exclusive. According to Gershom Scholem, "The Kabbalah in its historical significance, can be defined as the product of the interpenetration of Jewish Gnosticism and Neoplatonism" (45).

become a revolutionary, to have attempted regicide, and then to have suffered the death penalty. Apparently the mature Alyosha was to have been modeled on the revolutionary, Dmitry Vladimirovich Karakozov, whose attempted assassination of the Tsar, Alexander II, in 1866 led to his execution (Grossmann, *Dostoevsky* 586 – 587). The similarity of the name Karakozov to Karamazov, which will not have gone unnoticed, lends support to the idea not only that names beginning with the letter K in the novel bear a special significance, but also that Alyosha Karamazov may be numbered among the guilty.

As well as the “gnostics” or revolutionaries, there are also those characters in the novel whose names begin with the letter K but whose bent is not towards the intellectual; they, nevertheless, harbour a secret of a sectarian kind as in the case of Maria Kondratyevna whose name gives the clue to her role as Smerdyakov’s “Castrate madonna.” (Peace 262). There are also those such as Katerina Khokhlakov and Katerina Verkhovtsev who appear to have a secret to confess, but whose inner lives are rather characterized by spiritual emptiness. All of these aspects of the symbol K direct attention to the dissenting element in Dostoevsky’s fictional characters, whether on the plane of politics, religion, or morals, and whether in the sphere of domestic life or the larger area of Russian society as a whole. Indeed, the state of the macrocosm is epitomized by Dostoevsky in the name he gives to the town in which the events of the novel take place: *Skotoprigonyevsk* meaning pigsty.

IV.

We have now to consider an aspect of the Kabbalah and its symbolization in the letter K which does not have a direct bearing on the word in its meaning of “secrecy”: “Kabala” in Russia was also the word used to describe an agreement in which, if a debt were unpaid, the creditor would be entitled to exact obligation of labour. If this happened, the debtor was said to go into “Kabala” (i.e., debt slavery), and so it was that the term came to be used figuratively to mean “servitude” or “bondage.” (Dahl’s famous Dictionary of 1881 in which were collected a wide range of the peasant usage of the Russian language includes the colloquial use of the word “Kabala.”)³⁴ The theme of monetary debt is, of course, a central

³⁴ I am indebted to Angela Livingstone for directing my attention to the importance of Dahl’s Dictionary in support of my argument.

problem in *The Brothers Karamazov*:³⁵ Fyodor Karamazov, Katerina Verkhovtsev,³⁶ Kuzma Samsanov, and even Dmitry Karamazov in his early encounter with Katerina, are all creditors. On the other hand, Dmitry's position is reversed when he becomes both his father's and his fiancée's debtor, and it is this reversal and their supremacy over him which, with the murder of the father, leads to his transportation into the extreme "Kabala" of penal servitude.³⁷

"Kabala" as economic bondage epitomizes two important aspects of Dostoevsky's awareness. On the historical plane it directs attention to the encroachment of western European capitalism upon the economy and culture of the Slavic people.³⁸ At a personal level it refers to the encroachments made upon the author's own freedom by the demands of his creditors. Dostoevsky spent a great deal of his life under the threat of "Kabala," a threat which drove him abroad on at least one occasion.³⁹ He had to meet his editors' deadlines in order to avoid forfeiture of all the rights over his novels, and it was often for this reason that his work was written in a fever of haste. A case in point is his agreement with the editor, Stellovsky, in which he had contracted to write a novel of not less than a hundred and sixty pages. The agreement included a clause to the effect that if the novel were not delivered by a certain date, Dostoevsky would not only have to pay Stellovsky a large fine but that he, Stellovsky, would be entitled to publish every work written by the novelist in the nine years subsequent to the agreement without payment.⁴⁰ Out of this threat of "Kabala" grew the novel *The Gambler*, which was dictated to the stenographer, Anna Snitkin (soon to become the author's wife, and eventually to put his financial affairs in order), and completed in less than a month.

It is evident from the above example that Dostoevsky had a personal ground for designating the names in his novel with K as their first letter. His identification of himself with those like Dmitry

³⁵ The theme of money in Dostoevsky's novels has been amply treated by Jacques Catteau.

³⁶ *Verkhovenstvo* in Russian means "supremacy." See Peace 142, who draws attention to this word in connection with Stepan (the father) and Peter (the son) Verkhovensky in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Devils*.

³⁷ The economic aspect of "Kabala" can be seen to converge with its secret aspect when Smerdyakov reveals to Ivan the secret signal which is to be transmitted by Grushenka should she decide to visit Fyodor. In this event she is to receive from him "a big envelope, sealed with three seals, with three thousand roubles in it" (317 – 320).

³⁸ There are numerous direct references to this encroachment in *The Diary of a Writer*.

³⁹ For example, the journey to Europe begun in 1867.

⁴⁰ See A.P. Milyukov's reminiscences in Grossman, *Dostoevsky* 391; Hoffmann 271 – 275; and Catteau, 136 – 140.

Karamazov, who live under the constant threat of “Kabala,” is readily understandable in the context of the author’s own precarious dealings with his creditors. A further personal correspondence can be detected in Smerdyakov, who like his creator, suffers from epilepsy. Dostoevsky’s choice of the name Fyodor for the father points to a further self-identification. The fact that in the unwritten second volume Alyosha Karamazov was to have become a revolutionary, and then to have been executed, approximates to the author’s earlier experience of arrest and mock execution. It is likely, also, that the character of Ivan Karamazov was already developing in his mind when, in referring to the plan of his last work, Dostoevsky wrote to Maykov: “The main question that will be discussed in all the parts [of the novel] is one that has worried me, consciously or unconsciously, all my life---the existence of God.”⁴¹ In short, the author is not dead to the text, but rather aspects of him can be covertly identified in the histories of each member of the Karamazov family.

It may better be understood from Dostoevsky’s confession of his religious doubts why it was that Kowner’s philosophical “pro and contra” concerning the existence of God and the immortality of the soul was taken by Dostoevsky as the prototype of Ivan Karamazov’s “Rebellion”: Kowner’s letter had conveyed to the author exactly the nature of his own doubts which, incidentally, he did not confess to his correspondent. Confession, instead, was made at a secondary level by Ivan Karamazov. The author, in other words, was acknowledging through his fictional “double” his misgivings about the old philosophy founded upon the Russian Orthodox religion, and the persuasiveness of the new revolutionary, rationalist, and materialist thinking initiated by Spinoza and promulgated by such cosmopolitan Jews as Marx, Lassalle, Börne, and Crémieux (and to a limited degree by Kowner), for in their science, their cosmopolitanism, and their political dissidence, Dostoevsky could see a reflection of his own waning religious faith, his personal loss of cultural identity, and the underlying non-conformity of his own thinking. It is, perhaps, this aspect of the author which Tolstoy had in mind when he remarked to Gorky that there was “something Jewish” in Dostoevsky’s blood (Steiner 294). Certainly the arbitrary manner of his arrest, imprisonment, mock execution, penal servitude and exile recall the perennial sufferings of the Jewish people and their enforced wanderings

⁴¹ Quoted by David Magarshack in his introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*, xiv.

in the world.⁴² But Dostoevsky could not lend his support to the modern thinking because to have done so would have seemed to him like a betrayal of his mother country, which would also have been to risk once more provoking the penal authority of the paternal Tsar. The fact that, on the one hand, *Jewish* thinkers and activists were playing such an important part in eroding the traditional values of the Christian faith and, on the other, that Meyer Amschel Rothschild's financial empire was exercising such an influence on the politics of nearly every European country, must have lent support in Dostoevsky's mind to the contemporary myth that Jewish interests were vying for world power and that the Freemasons, who had also been attributed with such aims, were merely their puppets.⁴³

Dostoevsky may also have known of the Kabbalistic tenet prophesying the restoration of the world to order by the Jewish people whose exile, it was believed, epitomized the exile of the whole of mankind since the beginning of creation (Scholem 245). In which case the mantic and Kabbalistic tenor of Eliphas Lévi's *The Key of the Mysteries*, together with its imperialist objective, must have seemed to the Russian author as though prophecy were to be actualized. This is how it comes about that *The Brothers Karamazov* is so impregnated with the letter K. The fact that no comment has ever been made about the significance of the letter K in the novel can, I believe, be explained by the covert manner in which Dostoevsky has *sown* his symbol.⁴⁴ He is, in other words, employing a secrecy which runs directly counter to the openness of his opinions annunciated in *The Diary of a Writer*.

⁴² For other approaches to Dostoevsky's "Judaism," see Steinberg 103 – 105; and Shauli 236 – 239.

⁴³ See Mellor 64.

⁴⁴ The reader's attention is directed to the Epigraph for the novel drawn from Chapter 12 of St. John's Gospel: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (verse 24). Diane Thompson, in her book on *The Brothers Karamazov*, maintains that the Epigraph can be seen as a metaphor for Dostoevsky's poetics; she writes: "With his choice of Epigraph Dostoevsky gave us a leading clue for interpreting his last novel and for immediately recognizing the system of cultural memory which forms its all encompassing context"(67). It is noteworthy, also, that Eliphas Lévi in his *Key of the Mysteries* quotes the same verse (173 – 174), though not as an aesthetic principle, but rather with a political purpose.

Although Kowner may not have been aware of Dostoevsky's subtle manner of symbolization, it must have been clear to him, as it was to Georg Lukács after him, that "The dialectics of [the novel characters'] evolution, their ideological struggle, takes a completely different direction than the consciously envisaged goals of the journalist Dostoevsky" (Lukács 156). This is why the radical, Kowner, could write to his correspondent that in his novels he found him incomparably stronger and more sympathetic than in his *Diary* articles (Grossman, *Beichte* 182). He could detect in Dostoevsky's fiction a certain ideological vacillation which suggested to him that the adamant writer of the *Diary* was actually in two minds about his support for the Russian establishment and the traditional theology of the Orthodox Church. He might even have intuited that Dostoevsky's strategic use of esoteric signifiers (secret designs) has the effect of destabilizing any overt ideological tendency which the author might have wished to express, rather as Mikhail Bakhtin has shown in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* that a polyphony of voices in Dostoevsky's narrative world negates any possibility of an author-centred perspective.

Finally, it should be recognized that Dostoevsky's manner of projecting personal dilemma away from himself onto a multiplicity of fictional characters effectively guarded him from suspicion of personal duplicity (secret designs) and a recurrence of the harrowing events of 1849: arrest, interrogation, mock execution, and imprisonment in a Siberian penal colony.

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Once more apropos of the punning in "Bobok"

Ia nehom byl pokryt, a dnes' pokryt zemleiu,
Moj dom byl tselyj svet, a nyne tesnyj grob.
Kheraskov¹

Zdes' perst' tvoia, a dukha net.
Gde-zh on?—On tam.—Gde tam?—Ne znaem.
Derzhavin²

Beda, esli o predmetakh vozvyshennykh stanet razdavat'sia gniloe slovo;
pust' uzhe luchshe razdaetsia gniloe slovo o gnilykh predmetakh.
Gogol³

Est', naprimer, zdes' odin takoj, kotoryj pochtu sovsem razlozhilsia, no raznedel' v shest' on vsio eshche vdrug probormochet odno slovtso, konechno besmyslennoe, pro kakoj-to bobok: „Bobok, bobok“, — no i v nem, znachit, zhizn' vsio eshche teplitsia nezametnoiu iskroj...—Dovol'no glupo. Nu a kak zhe vot ia ne imeiu obonianiia, a slyshu von'?"
"Zapiski odnogo litsa"⁴

¹M. M. Kheraskov, "Sonet i Epitafiia" (The Sonnet with an Epitaph), *Ezhemesiachnyia Sochineniia* (Monthly Writings) August, #VII, (SPb.:1755), p. 166

²G. R. Derzhavin, "Na smert' kn. M." 1779

³N. V. Gogol', "O tom, chto takoe slovo," *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s duz'iami*, as quoted in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij*. Vol. VIII. (Leningrad: AN SSSR/IRLI, 1952); p. 232.

⁴F. M. Dostoevskij, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij v tridtsati tomax*, vol. XXI (Leningrad: Nauka. 1980), p. 51. Henceforth this edition will be quoted within the text as PSSD, specifying the volume/page numbers in Roman and Arabic numerals respectively in parentheses, and the *Diary of a Writer* will be referred to as simply the *Diary*.

What do you think of the following distinction, even broader than yours between rational and irrational vision: The Baroque and some of the German romantics, such as Novalis, Tieck and Wackenroder, as well as Gogol take for granted that there is God, but also that the ways of the Lord are incomprehensible to man, may seem absurd—men are like puppets in God's hands. Dostoevsky saw Gogol as a puppeteer pulling his characters on strings—and so did Gogol feel himself. Dostoevsky stands before God and demands justice—on his, human, Russian terms, reserves the right not to accept God's world. [...] The underground man is no puppet on anybody's string. V. Ivanov said that it is Jewish people who were first to stand before their God as plaintiffs, *isttsy*, demanding justice. The Greeks accepted the injustices of their gods as unavoidable... Merezhkovsky said that there was something Jewish about Dostoevsky!

V. Terras⁵

I.

Would it possibly be too optimistic to expect from the writer who was prone to making such well-known, yet still ambiguous, statements regarding the capacity of "beauty to save the world," or of "the most realistic art to be the most fantastic," to come to a concrete, unidirectional reading of any one of his works? Such "dialectically" opposed studies by their titles (which would send post-Hegelian Russian formalists to a frenzy), as "Dostoevsky—the realist" by Sven Linnér and "Dostoevsky—the romantic" by Victor Terras, for instance, to both of which I had the honor to listen at the *Eighth International Dostoevsky Symposium* in Oslo,⁶ typify the polysemantic complexity and richness of Dostoevsky's art. A recent and excellent study by Ilya Vinitsky "Where *Bobok* Is Buried: The Theosophical Roots of Dostoevskij's 'Fantastic Realism',"⁷ comes on the heels of dozens contributions—all (to a larger or lesser extent) devoted to the decoding of the enigma surrounding only one work: Dostoevskij's "Bobok. Zapiski odnogo litsa." Apart from developing the more productive and influential interpretations of this concurrently macabre and amusing story by such scholars, as Bakhtin, Milosz, or Tunimanov, and considerably buttressing its "Swedenborgian subtext," Vinitsky offers an exhaustive list of other contributions, spurring us to list them all again here. We do so also on account that none of them engage, as we do, a much less exotic

⁵From Victor Terras's letter to me, dated 4.4. 1999.

⁶1992

⁷*Slavic Review*. Vol. 65, #3 (Fall, 2006), pp.523-543.

understanding of what the very word "Bobok" implies in several living Slavic languages. At the same time, our modest contribution will project such reading by taking to task another famous declaration by Dostoevsky regarding the substance and glory of his own art when compared to Tolstoy's—namely Dostoevsky's pride in his ability to craft "the Poet of the Underground" who would not reform himself, as Bolkonsky did, in Tolstoy's fictional universe;⁸ moreover, perhaps in a semifacetious way, we shall endow such poet with Baroque mentality.

Indeed, since much of Dostoevsky's craft deals with the semantics of "the underground," let us begin with his most famous creation regarding this concept, the *Notes from Underground*. The eminent critic Irving Howe had the following to say regarding Dostoevsky's "underground man":

The assumption that man is rational, and the assumption that his character is definable—so important to western literature—are both threatened when the underground man appears on the historical scene. [...] As rebel against the previously secure Enlightenment, he rejects the claims of science, the ordered world-view of the rationalists, the optimism of the radicals. He is tempted neither by knowledge, like Faust, nor glory, like Julien Sorel; he is beyond temptation of any sort. The idea of ambition he regards as a derangement of ego, and idealism as the most absurd of vanities. He hopes neither to reform nor cure the world, only to escape from beneath its pressures.

A creature of the city, he has no fixed place among the social classes; he lives in holes and crevices, burrowing beneath the visible structure of society. Elusive and paranoid, he plays a great many parts yet continues to be recognized as a type through his unwavering rejection of official humanity: the humanity of decorum, moderation and reasonableness. Even while tormenting himself with reflections upon his own insignificance, the underground man hates still more—more than his own hated self—the world above ground.

Brilliantly anticipated in Diderot's fiction, *Rameau's Nephew*, the underground man first appears full face in Dostoevsky's novels. Here he assumes his most exalted guise, as a whole man suffering the burdens of consciousness. In *Notes from the Underground* he scrutinizes his motives with a kind of phenomenological venom; and then, as if to silence the moralists of both Christianity and humanism who might urge upon him a therapeutic commitment to action, he enters a few relationships with other people, relationships that are commonplace yet utterly decisive in revealing the impossibility of escape from his poisoned self.

In the 20th Century the underground man comes into his own and, like a rise of pus, breaks through the wrinkled skin of tradition. Thus far, at least, it is his century.

⁸Incidentally, cited by Professor Linnér at the aforementioned symposium, as part of his thesis.

He appears everywhere in modern literature, though seldom with the intellectual resources and intensity of grandeur that Dostoevsky accorded him.⁹

If Howe's cited passage still remains to be one of the most eloquent summaries of the impact this Dostoevsky's work makes even in the 21st century, the critic's similes likening the underground man's essence to a *rise of pus* and to a *venomous* enterprise are not merely fortuitous choices of words: they testify to his close reading of some of Dostoevsky's more acid and *inelegant* puns, which are—apparently on account of their prurient semantics—less habitually underscored in Dostoevsky studies. Our contribution touches upon the significance of one such disagreeable pun in the short story "Bobok," which seems to this day to be still enigmatic, yet brings the syllogism apropos of the essence of "soul" and "matter" embedded in the story, to a truly colossal, if farcically boorish end, as we see later.

Before we turn to the suggested simple subtext in "Bobok," let us note that its acidic story comes also from the *underground*, except that—as opposed to the *Notes*—its formal locus is no longer metaphorically placed "beneath the visible structure of society," as Howe puts it, but simply beneath the physical ground of a city's cemetery. Moreover, its generic appurtenance differs from the *Notes* by being dialogic: it could technically be called "Dialogues from Underground," or even more precisely "Dialogues of the Dead." Let us furthermore underscore that while both—the inhabitants of the physical underground in "Bobok" and the protagonist of the underground man's *Notes*—occupy a pole inimical to travel, both are also caught in a *movement* of another kind—one which traverses the faculties of mind—but, at the same time, one which grants no logical relief to such faculties, ending again in a stasis. The two stalemates are worked out quite differently, of course, but both are—and this is another contention of our study—two of the many stages in Dostoevsky's reading of Ecclesiastes.

The treadmill of logic in the underground man's self-styled definition of the *paradox of being*, revolves around the following syllogism: Man, he posits, is both a "rational animal" and an "irrational human," e.g. man may recognize by reason what is to his advantage, but, at the same he may—by free will—deliberately choose to contravene what reason dictates. Man's free will, he argues, therefore consists not in his ability to exercise judgment

⁹Howe, Irving. "Celine: The Sod Beneath the Skin - I." *The New Republic* (July 20, 1963), 19-22.

or make reasoned choices (a view posited by the Enlightenment and alive today), but rather in his ability to exercise *caprice*, hence to be irrational. Of course, contravening self-interest (or any Crystal Palace society) leads to suffering, and for that reason "suffering is the sole cause of consciousness," he tells his readers. If "suffering is the sole cause of consciousness," and if to be conscious is to be one's self, then to be one's self is indeed to be a man. In short, to be a man, rather than "an ant, a piano key, or an organ stop" (in his terms) is to be trapped on a continuous treadmill of logic which brings the aforementioned series to a complete circle—to the paradox of man as both a "rational animal" *and* an "irrational human," caught in his subterranean and sub-social existence. It is then due to his fixation on a man's need to savor "his own toothache" so as to prove his individuality, as he puts it, that the underground man rejects any movement to "reform" oneself or be part of Tolstoy's fictional universe with its mimetic ability to pass it off as real.

The underground man's argument might have been different had he been born a creature of the *steppe*, the typical setting of old Russian folk epic quests. Perhaps he might have defended his precious sense of *freedom*—after all, his principal goal—in an open combat as a legendary hero, like Ilya of Murom. As Howe importantly observes, however, the underground man is "a creature of the city," and in a Russian context, a creature of St. Petersburg. In Dostoevsky's eyes the semi-utopian city founded by Peter the Great had degenerated into an unnatural and terrifying setting for human habitation, in which such miracles of nature as the purity of powder-white snow—normally falling as *manna* from the skies—turns "wet, yellow and dingy." Perhaps when Dostoevsky himself looked up into the skies, he hoped that the suffering he considered so necessary for the development of the human self would also prove redemptive. Through it, perhaps, man would be led to another city, akin to St. Augustine's *City of God*, or—following the path of some medieval saints—to a monastery. Such are at least the indications from his other writings, but this hope is certainly not offered to the underground man. In a world with no God and no Heaven to reproach for his condition, he vents his spite against those well-wishers of mankind who posit utopian city-society settings which would eliminate *suffering*—his last vestige of freedom—and lay the foundations for dehumanizing mankind. In their ideal world, composed of even more accurate geometrical spaces than his Petersburg offered, 2x2 would always

equal 4, it would never snow and the skies would always be clear, as in a sanitized city-scape that Evgeny Zamiatin was to set later on in his seminal dystopian novel, *We*.

Whatever the full range of Dostoevsky's philosophical views ultimately became (in Zamiatin's case those at the core of the Grand Inquisitor's passage in *Brothers Karamazov* were especially influential), the *Diary of the Writer* (*Dnevnik Pisatel'ia*), which appeared in a serialized form between 1873-1881, contains elements crucial to our understanding of such views and his reactions to the *city-scape* human culture which Peter had compelled Russia to embrace as a utopian dream, calling it his *paradise*. In "Bobok" the earliest of his seminal works in this regard (which include, in addition, "The Little Boy and the Savior's Christmas Tree" [Mal'chik u Khrista na Elke] and "A Dream of a Ridiculous Man" [Son smeshnogo cheloveka], Dostoevsky transports us into the ultimate opposite of any paradise—the netherworld of the city cemetery—in a superb example of the author's continuing experimentation with the fantastic, which transgresses the boundaries between the living and the dead and—just like his *Notes*—again negates Petersburg as a setting in which humanity can flourish.

Of course Dostoevsky is not original in this regard, and there is a considerable reason to connect "Bobok," as well as much of his *Diary* to Gogol's so-called *Petersburg Tales* and especially with *Arabeski* (Arabesques),¹⁰ as I have already attempted to show in my less well-known study, "In search of representational means for Inner Worlds: Gogol' - Dostoevsky - Kafka,"¹¹ If ever an aspect of genre was mentioned in connection with Gogol's *Arabesques*, allusions were usually made to the term not infrequently used in Germany in the early nineteenth century and referring to a type of free-form literature, advocated within the tenets of German Romanticism and idealist philosophy, at the inception of which the

¹⁰Cf. N. V. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij* 14 vols. (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1937-52). The most persuasive view regarding this collection is that they represent a shapeless miscellany of essays on art and literature, combined with examples of fictional prose, which are usually published in Russia separately as *Petersburg Tales*; even the cited Academy edition is typical in this regard by having different sections of *Arabesques* in separate volumes (henceforth quoted within the text as PSSG, specifying the volume/page numbers in Roman/Arabic numerals respectively, in parentheses).

¹¹*Brown Slavic Contributions*, Vol. XIII. (Providence, 2000), pp. 112-140. I am afraid, I will not be able to make my current point without restating some of my views posited in that article.

Schlegel brothers and Schelling were particularly prominent.¹² While Gogol's dependence on various facets of German idealism cannot be doubted, his sources for employing the term "arabesques" could have been manifold, broadly reaching into the respective histories of painting, architecture, design, music and dance, and even to patterning in verbal expression. All these disciplines were, importantly enough, addressed as individual topics in Gogol's work, yet were also inter-related with his fiction. Indeed, there would have been a great deal more to be learned about Gogol's mature fiction, if his *Arabesques* were ever taken seriously as an organized whole. The pattern of interlacing disparate elements¹³ and reaching beyond the boundaries of superficially imposed planes of discourse is common not only to all of them, but to his later works as well. It was this approach which allowed Gogol to break from the norms of his day, to freely mix fiction with art criticism, to employ it as a compositional and stylistic device allowing, for instance, his hyperbolic metaphors to lose sight of the items which originally prompted their appearance. In his later fiction, such as *Dead Souls* which continues this arabesque spirit, the same device was equally applied in his Homeric similes, sprung as if on the spur of the moment.

While the term "arabesques" was used in diverse fields, Gogol paid special attention to its function in the history of art and framing, to which he had devoted in part his very first essay in the book, entitled "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" (PSSG, VIII, 9-13). In European art, arabesque frames allowed parts of the represented world (usually some form of vegetation like branches of trees or the various curled stems of vines) to protrude or "grow

¹²For the more recent of the rare treatments of the topic, consult R. Jenness's *Gogol's Aesthetics Compared to Major Elements of German Romanticism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 141 pp.

¹³Interlacing of *similar* rather than *dissimilar* elements is articulated extremely convincingly by Susanne Fusso in her article "The landscape of *Arabesques*" in *The Logos of Gogol: Poetics. Aesthetics, Metaphysics*, S. Fusso & P. Meyer eds., (Northwestern U. Press, 1992). Indeed, her thinking on this subject often complements my thoughts and represent a hopeful sign that Gogol's *Arabesques* will finally be republished in its original format and with sensible comments. Parenthetically, it should be noted that it is to the late Carl R. Proffer's great credit that he made *Arabesques* available to English readers (cf. his Nikolai Gogol. *Arabesques*. Translated by Alexander Tulloch. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982) and to Donald Fanger's first sensible approach to this work in western scholarship in his *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

beyond" the confines of the painting.¹⁴ In drawings and etchings, this principle would be achieved by having the line(s) bordering the picture be interrupted at a certain point, so as to have the picture "step into" the margins. Often such drawings would exhibit further arabesque patterning within themselves by showing vegetation freely taking over architectural lines and shapes in landscapes and growing "into" or "out of" the buildings depicted in them. This function of protruding beyond the ordinary frame of things is at the core of Gogol's poetics in his *Arabesques*. Specific images of grapevines reaching into the heavens (cf. in his first essay: "Mir, uvityj vinogradnymi grozdijami i maslichnymi lozami..." PSSG, VIII, 9) or, together with other vegetation, breaking the simple geometry of buildings which, he felt, could be considerably improved by such vegetative interlacing ("On Contemporary Architecture," PSSG, VIII, 56-75), moonlight unable to be contained by the frame of the window in "The Portrait," as well as the notion of the portrait "stepping out" of its frame (with the frame itself holding the riches for material advancement of the poor artist in that story), the sense of boundlessness in his depictions of any "genius,"—all these were but a fraction of the dynamic imaging with which the author bombarded his readers, as if afraid of stasis or momentary contemplation. In his first essay, this predilection for "movement" was asserted in the image of the art of painting, which, personified, "reached out from behind the multitude of antique gilded frames," themselves caught in the whirlwind of "long galleries, flashing by, as if in a fog."

Fogs were, in turn, another of Gogol's favorite devices for incomplete framing, as for example, in "Nevsky Prospect." Images of the ideal female, peeping out from the frames in Piskarev's mind, mingle with the image of a prostitute he meets in the fog, and their irreconcilability leads to his downfall. Clouded perception of reality, in "Diary of a Madman," has its

¹⁴My first ideas on Gogol's concept of arabesque framing sprung into existence following Professor Karsten Harries's report on "The Broken Frame: On Roccoco Ornament," which he read at the *Eighth Annual Meeting of the Northeast American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, (Providence, RI, November 2, 1984). Despite participating with Professor Harries (an expert on West European Art & Architecture at Yale University), on a panel with an entirely different topic than Gogol's fiction and entitled "Signs and Symbols in the Eighteenth Century," I became, nonetheless, convinced that Gogol had appropriated precisely this, visual perception of Arabesque framing for the title of his first collection of essays and Petersburg tales, stemming from his awareness of the history of framing in West European Art, rather than strictly from literature.

protagonist (of considerable relation to Dostoevsky's narrator in "Bobok") believe that dogs write letters and that he himself is King of Spain. All these different images of frames, unable to contain the pictures they hold, unite Gogol's fictional and nonfictional prose into a whole which may well be called properly nothing else but *Arabesques*.

In a story related to this cycle, "The Nose", an arabesque framing device is employed throughout the story and so are the fogs in those places where the narrative takes an abrupt shift. Not only does this story start with an allusion to framing by a mention of a barbershop's signboard, "where a gentleman is depicted with his cheeks covered with soapsuds" (therefore, engaging his reader's mental projection of the signboard on the problem as to whether the gentlemen's face is portrayed either with or without his nose to be seen), but the whole story deals with a series of fantastic adventures, which occur as if in a dream of the protagonist whose nose has disappeared from his face and has taken on an independent existence. It must be mentioned that a nose in Gogol's imagination must be understood as that precisely arabesque protrusion from the plane of the human face, which allows not only for his best characterization, but also for contact between his inner and the surrounding physical world.

While this story, if superficially viewed, does not offer to its readers much more than an anecdote in which the protagonist's lost nose finally finds its proper place on its owner's face, it represents the emergence of a crisis in Gogol's worldview. If his first collection of stories, *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (1831-2), together with its sequel *Mirgorod* (1835), expressed at once the pathos of heroism and supernatural terror, stemming from native beliefs and myths, but also the bathos of folksy humor, banality, silliness and sheer stupidity permeating provincial life, these two modes of behaviour, despite the unity provided by a Ukrainian setting, were shown as *separate*. But in 1834-5, the discrepancy between the real and imagined worlds became so patent, so insistent for Gogol that he could no longer accept the Romantic imagery which contemplated an ideal world, particularly as imagined in his essayist component of *Arabesques*, while at the same time he was extremely loath to give it up and accept the real world. A tension developed in his imagery between the two worlds on which he formerly focused as separate, the ideal and the real: they ceased to interact and began to merge and fuse. Brilliantly anticipated in the fictional parts of

his *Arabesques*, most importantly in "Diary of a Madman," an alternate, new world of Gogol's arose from these polarities: a mixed-up world, in which the motivation of the fantastic and the real became the same — a world of the *absurd*. It is for these reasons that in the "Nose" the separated nose achieved a rank higher than its noseless owner. Similarly in his last work of the Petersburg's cycle, "The Overcoat" (1842), a ghost in the fantastic ending of the story was just as intent on stealing overcoats as thieves were in the physical world, occupied by the poor protagonist who so single-mindedly saved his money for the coat.

Thus, the stories of the Peterburg cycle are united by criteria other than those of his early tales and should be viewed among the first precursors of the fiction characteristic of such writers as Franz Kafka, and all-the-way to Jorge Luis Borges. Significantly also, they are united by the persona of a narrator who is clearly no longer the bee-keeper Pan'ko, but one whose mission is nearly indistinguishable from the prophetic aspirations of Gogol' himself. He interjects his voice either in separate essays or in longer asides in fictional parts of his works, such as in "The Portrait," anticipating the moralizing voice of his *Selected Passages From the Correspondence with Friends* (1847) to which *Arabesques* were but a first step. If Gogol's greatest achievements would come from larger forms than simply prose tales, they all utilized techniques advanced in *Arabesques*. It is principally arabesque modeling which allowed for the characters in Part I of *Dead Souls* in 1842 either to "grow out" of their surroundings, such as Sobakevich's stolid architecture anticipating the appearance of their clumsy owner, or have themselves so completely "grow into" their property, as did Pliushkin, indeed, the adventures of the entire work to grow out of the curls of the *perfectly arabesque frame*, which Gogol' apparently himself designed for the frontispiece in 1842—the frame which, in turn, itself grows out of the black void surrounding the very biggest word in white letters: "POEMA." If in this estranged provincial land, called Rus', the living souls - the landowners are far more immobile than the souls of their "deceased" peasants whom they are selling as living in underhanded deals to Chichikov, then it is arabesque function which denies Korobochka the sense of reality and forces her to inquire what might be the "actual" price for "dead souls;" it also gives Chichikov's "wheel" the necessary propelling force to transform itself from an image embodying banality to the troika, which rises above the

absurdity and triviality of the human condition in an exhilarating flight of fantasy at the end of the "poëma."

Gogol's only complete work of the last decade of his life was *Selected Passages From My Correspondence with Friends* (1847), a miscellany of essays on morality, religion, citizenship, literature and art centered around the persona of the writer, which was welcomed by few and denounced by many as a reactionary and hypocritical book. Unnoticed to this day as a work of literature and treated only as Gogol's socio-political commentary, the book was in fact Gogol's final return to some of the topics first addressed in *Arabesques*, but with the fictional element almost completely removed. Whatever fictivity remained was applied to the author's persona uniting the entire book. Unlike the narrator in *Arabesques*, who is mostly full of optimism and vitality (he even begins the second part of his book with an essay entitled "Life"), *Selected Passages* begins—just as Dostoevsky's *Notes* and "Bobok"—as an ingenious revival of the gothic "Dialogues of the Dead"—a genre, which (unlike its antecedents of Greek and Roman antiquity) not only allowed but, due to its subordination to the Masonic ethics in its Russian eighteenth-century manifestations, indeed demanded commentary on the moral side of human existence.¹⁵

Again, perhaps entrapped by his own technique of arabesque modeling and as an ultimate proof of his prophetic mission, first expressed in *Arabesques*, Gogol attempted to break through the final barrier separating the living from the dead (in the prologue to the book he begins by mentioning that he was "fatally ill" and that "death was already near," while the first part of his narrative consists of his "Last Will"), which were still to a degree kept apart in *Dead Souls*. At the same time, utterly unable to improve upon the moral character of Chichikov in an artistically satisfying way, and working under constant pressure of his socially minded literary critics to write socially relevant literature, Gogol' apparently decided to appoint his own persona as a substitute for Chichikov.¹⁶ These new

¹⁵We shall explicate this point below, when our argument will turn to Dostoevsky's sense of this genre.

¹⁶Despite the fact that there are numerous and well documented parallels between the fifth chapter of Part II of *Dead Souls* and *Selected Passages*, indeed whole chunks of prose quoted verbatim (cf. especially the commentary in PSSG, VII, 401-403), the latter is rarely discussed as Gogol's likely solution in fulfilling his plan to follow the basic design of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

"pokhozhdeniia" (adventures) of Gogol's super positive self were projected no longer as a journey to Kherson province, but as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to secure a place in the Lord's domain for "Living Souls" (he speaks of "his inner need to travel to the Holy Land" and, *along with those whom he gathers on his road*, to come to the Lord's Grave and pray for his readers at the beginning of his "Predvedomlenie" [PSSG, VIII, 216], while at the end of it, he believes, he might even have the strength to pray for *all Russians*: "Ja zhe u Groba Gospodnego budu molit'sja o vsekh moikh sootchestvennikakh, ne iskljuchaja ni edinogo" [PSSG, VIII, 218]. Yet, just as in the case of his *Arabesques*, such hints were not understood by his readers as a literary device, thus prompting skewed commentaries for both.¹⁷

But Gogol' was himself treading on dangerous ground. If his narrator in *Arabesques* was to a degree still detached from the author,¹⁸ in *Selected*

Susan Fusso in her "Mertvyje Dushi: Fragment, Parable, Promise" (*Slavic Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1 Spring, 1990, pp. 32-47), was on the right track to make this deductive leap possible in quoting from Gogol's *Selected Passages* the following passage (from PSSG, VIII, 298) in her translation:

There comes a time when one must not speak at all about the lofty and the beautiful without having at the same time shown *clearly as day* the paths and roads to it for everyone. The latter circumstance was little and weakly developed in the second volume of *Mertvyje dushi*, but it should have been practically the main thing; and that is why it was burned.

Needing the passage to illustrate her preceding point that "the task of the sequel to *Mertvyje dushi* was to dispense with dangerous enigma" (p. 46), Fusso chose to place her emphasis on the words "clearly as day," when in fact it is in the adjacent words, "the paths and roads to it for everyone," in which Gogol's own emphasis lies. Having shown already "clearly as day" the states of perfection available to the various kinds of "genius" in his *Arabesques*, but accessible only to the chosen few, it is the "paths and roads to it for everyone" that is his main concern in *Selected Passages*. Thus, while it is true, as Fusso concludes her essay, that Gogol's "failure to write the sequel to *Mertvyje dushi* was his last creative act," (p. 47), *Mertvyje dushi* was by no means his last writing act on the theme, envisioned by its design and implicit in both titles, provided for Part I. The fact that Gogol' alludes in his Preface to *Selected Passages* to having almost "died" clearly implies that he has visited the land of "Mertvyje dushi," and the fact that he publishes his correspondence with "Zhivye dushi," himself taking on the path to Jerusalem, which Chichikov could never take or show to his contemporaries, - all this is a clear indication that there was "a sequel" published to *Mertvyje dushi* in Gogol's time, and an important one at that, however uncreative it was and however we may not like its implicit message or design. Simultaneously it was, as I hope to make clear in this study, also a sequel to his *Arabesques*.

¹⁷The first who paid serious attention to the *Selected Passages* as a work of literature was, apparently, Dostoevskij. This is especially evident in *Zapiski iz podpol'ja* (even in their title) which begin essentially with the same sentence as Gogol's last complete work (compare Gogol's "I was very sick" with Dostoevskij's "I am a sick man").

¹⁸By implicitly posing as a *friar* in his first essay, as will be also discussed below.

Passages, the masks of Gogol's author, prophet, and aesthetic critic in public service, and that of Gogol's the man were fashioned to appear as identical. Quite significantly, in *Arabesques*, the story about the "run-away" portrait involves fictional artists and a fictional portrait; in *Selected Passages* the story about a "run-away" portrait involves the actual visage of Gogol' and real, living artists.¹⁹ But the saccharine perfection, with which he adorned the image of the idealized, pious Gogol' in *Selected Passages* obviously did not match Gogol's private self. Unable to tear off the contours of the physiognomy he had glued onto his face and, having no longer any visible window (*via* the faculties of his own arabesque weaving) with access to jump from this unhappy marriage of ideal and real portraits of himself, Gogol became stuck in a tragic dichotomy of being. His anguish, resulting from his even greater isolation from his former foes and friends, combined with his strict observance of the practices of Russian Orthodox Lent, resulted in his premature death in 1852. His death functioned as a grim reminder of the dangers stemming from the complete removal of the barriers—frames which normally separate our physical existence from its metaphysical hypostasis—dangers which Gogol' consistently ignored in his life and in his art.

II.

Ever since his first novel, *Poor Folk*, Dostoevskij's attention to Gogol's writing was very keen and manifested itself in various permutations from Makar Devushkin's dependence on Akakij Bashmachkin to Dostoevskij's famous "Pushkin" speech, which he began verbatim as follows:

"Pushkin est' iavlenie chrezvychajnoe i, mozhet byt', edinstvennoe iavlenie russkogo dukha," - skazal Gogol'. Pribavliu ot sebia— i prorocheskoe. (PSSD, XXVI, 136)

Let us note that Dostoevskij's last public appearance started by quoting what Gogol' had to say about Pushkin specifically in *Arabesques* (cf. "Neskol'ko slov o Pushkine" in PSSG, VIII, 50), and that Dostoevskij's own view of Pushkin's genius for the most part matches not only Gogol's views of genius

¹⁹It is for this reason that he deals with the issue of unauthorized portraits in his "Last Will" so extensively, since the idea of the possibility of financial profits, which his own portrait might get in unscrupulous hands is terribly disturbing to Gogol' (cf. his VII-th point of "Zaveshchanie" in *Vybrannye mesta*, PSSG, VIII, 222-4)

as posited in *Arabesques*, but a general Romantic view of a prophetic, larger than life, role of the poet. Parenthetically, it should be added that Dostoevskij subsequently fashioned the last issue of his *Diary of the Writer* from this speech, thus ending, in a way, at a point from which Gogol' had begun almost half a century earlier.

This last nod in the direction of Gogol' was not accidental. It reaffirmed that Gogol', despite Dostoevskij's incessant attempts to overcome his legacy, was just as important to him in 1880-1 as he had been in the forties. If Gogol's importance for Dostoevskij the writer has been well studied, his importance for Dostoevskij, the diarist, or commentator of social issues has received less attention. Yet it was in this capacity that Dostoevskij's role as a publicist can be considered as linked with many of Gogol's devices and even facets of Gogol's world view, as first posited in *Arabesques* and developed in *Selected Passages*. If the relation between the narrators of "Bobok. Zapiski odnogo lica" and "Zapiski sumasshedshego," has been noted before, it has been scarcely pointed out that Gogol's "Zapiski sumasshedshego" is the last fictional entry in his *Arabesques*, while Dostoevskij's "Zapiski odnogo lica" forms the first fictional entry in the 1873 version of his *Diary of the Writer*.²⁰ By alluding to Gogol's

²⁰V. A. Tunimanov, for instance, in his excellent commentary on "Bobok," shows how the relation between "Zapiski sumasshedshego" and "Bobok" existed ever since the inception of Dostoevskij's story and was presumably planned as the author's ingenious response to L.K. Panjutin's criticism leveled at the author (in connection with the appearance of his very first chapters of the *Diary* in January, 1873), which read as follows:

"Dnevnik pisatelja" [...] napominaet izvestnye zapiski, okanchivaiushchiesia vosklitsaniem: "A vse-taki u alzhirskogo beia na nosu shishka!" Dovol'no vzglianut' na portret avtora "Dnevnika pisatelja", vystavlennoj v nastoiashchee vremia v Akademii khudozhestv, chtoby pochuvstvovat' k g-nu Dostoevskomu tu samu "zhalostlivost", nad kotoroi on tak nekstati glumitsia v svoem zhurnale. Eto portret cheloveka, istomlennogo tiazhkim nedugom. (*Golos*, 1873, 14 ianvaria, #14) (As quoted in PSSD, XXI, 402)

Tunimanov convincingly argues later how "replika Panjutina predopredelila blizost' *Zapisk odnogo lica* k *Zapiskam sumasshedshego* Gogolja," (PSSD, XXI, 403) and brings forth a number of parallelisms between these two masterpieces of Russian literature. But the trouble is that Panjutin's criticism can, on the one hand, be understood as being deliberately specific in quoting the last sentence from "Zapiski sumasshedshego" and, on the other, just as deliberately vague on two counts: 1. The last sentence of "Zapiski sumasshedshego" happens to coincide with the last sentence of the entire *Arabesques*, which could be, in fact, considered as "Zapiski Gogolja" (see below); 2. Panjutin seems to have gone even a step further and connect *Arabesques* with Gogol's *Selected Passages*, because it is only in them that there is a mention of both, Gogol's own "tjazhelyj nedug" (nearly costing his life) and Gogol's personal portrait. In other words, Panjutin, in his cruel allusion to Dostoevskij's epilepsy, seems to have displayed the sophistication of an acute literary

Arabesques in this way Dostoevskij must have been implying to his readers that his new undertaking was meant as connected to Gogol's proto-version of the genre he was engaged in creating. Those editors, who were inclined to see in Dostoevskij's *Diary of the Writer* "a new genre not only for himself, for the entire world literature" (PSSD, XXI, 372) must have entirely forgotten about Gogol's *Arabesques* and Dostoevskij's frequent, if mostly veiled allusions to them,²¹ such as, "Mechtal zhe Poprishchin ("Zapiski sumasshedshego" Gogolia) ob ispanskikh delakh..." (PSSD, XXI, 91)

Despite Dostoevskij's facetiousness in likening his own "mechty" (dreams) to those of Gogol's "madman," there is a serious note in these words published in an essay entitled "Mechty i grezy," in his first year as a diarist. Indeed, Dostoevskij's narrator could be considered as tied to Gogol's Poprishchin precisely in the way Gogol's serious, but just as daydreaming narrator of *Arabesques* is related to this character. Quite apart from such obvious similarities as that both are diarists, both have delusions of grandeur and feel competent to cope with the world's most urgent problems, there are significant structural elements which place them in complimentary positions. If Gogol's "serious" narrator alternately appears as a historian, expert on geography, architecture or education throughout his *Arabesques*, in the very first essay on "Sculpture, Painting and Music," which sets the tone to the entire collection, he poses, in an apparent echo of Wackenroder and Tieck, as an art-loving friar: "svetlee siiaj, pokal moj, v moej smirennoj kel'e, i da zdravstvuet zhivopis'" (PSSG, VIII, 10). This seemingly innocuous mention does, nevertheless, significantly alter the rhetorical format of the collection. Firstly, it sufficiently fictionalizes the narrator proper of all the essays which follow and separates him from the author (who appears only in the "Preface" and does not make any pretense that he is writing from a monastery). Secondly, it has a bearing on the overall

critic in first, tying—just as Gogol himself did—*Arabesques* to *Selected Passages*, and second, in recognizing Dostoevskij's implicit model for his poetics in the *Diary*.

²¹The reason Dostoevsky is rather hesitant in directly mentioning the titles of either *Arabesques* or *Selected Passages* though he frequently quotes from both, is most likely connected to the fact that both remained discredited in Dostoevskij's time. Having witnessed the public lynching of Gogol' for his *Selected Passages*, Dostoevskij, despite sharing many of Gogol's moral and ethical views, had to be careful. In addition, of course, Dostoevskij's *Diary* has an obvious generic and potentially semantic relation to a number of other *diaries*, both generally European and Russian, all the way to Karamzin's *Pis'ma Russkago Puteshestvoennika*, but their discussion falls outside of the purview of this study.

structure by being thematically related to the last entry in *Arabesques*, which highlights the fact that Poprishchin's head is shaven—an act, which he takes as signifying forcible consecration into a monastic order (Segodnia vybrili mne golovu, nesmotria na to, chto ia krichal izo vsej sily o nezhelanii byt' monakhom). Poprishchin's implicit role as an alter-ego to the serious monk-narrator in *Arabesques* is further signaled by the fact that the monk-narrator ends his essay by choosing music as the supreme art form, while Poprishchin was meant to have been a musician in Gogol's early drafts.²² Some references to music still remain in the final version of the *Diary*. The daughter of Poprishchin's superior sings like a canary, a friend of Poprishchin's plays the trombone beautifully, and in the tale's final passage Gogol has Poprishchin engage in a flight of fancy reminiscent of the cosmic reverberations of his narrator in the first essay and accompanu his flight by the sound of a chord resounding in the mist (struna zvenit v tumane).

There are no clues available as to what made Gogol to switch the narrator from a musician to a clerk. Given Gogol's facetious alter-ego motif in the *Diary of the Madman* however, there is reason to suspect that the author possibly wished to hide the true source of his inspiration, namely E.T.A. Hoffmann's novel, *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufaelligen Makulaturblättern*. (The Life and Opinions of Tomcat Murr, along with A Fragmentary Biography of the Conductor Johannes Kreisler as recorded on Random Galley-proofs).²³ Hoffman's protagonist, the tomcat Murr, has supposedly written his wild autobiography on the backs of the pages of a manuscript, some of which he has clawed to *shreds*. Interspersed with Murr's horrid poetry and musings on the superiority of cats to humans is the biography of Johannes Kreisler, Murr's owner. Kreisler is a composer who, although suffering bouts of paranoia, is a true musical genius. His story proceeds in reverse order to Murr's, creating a fragmentary, schizophrenic text, with the resultant effect not unlike Gogol's. *The Diary of a Madman*, which Gogol originally titled *The Diary of the Mad Musician* and then *Tatters from the Diary of the Madman*, features a correspondence

²²The original list of entries for the *Arabesques* contained the title "Zapiski sumashedshego muzykanta" instead of "Kločki iz zapisok sumasshedshego," as it was first published in part 2 of the *Arabesques* in 1835 (Cf. the penultimate draft as cit. in PSSG. VIII. 747-8).

²³2 vols. (first ed. Berlin, 1819-21).

between two pampered lapdogs.²⁴ Gogol's adaptation of nightmarish themes from *The Tales* of E.T.A. Hoffmann has been noted by a host of commentators. The reason that the threads to Hoffman's lesser-known novel were not heretofore noted might lie in the care Gogol took to separate his persona from the protagonist of *The Diary of the Madman* as well as from the likely source of its inspiration.²⁵ After all, Kreisler was the actual pseudonym under which Hoffmann himself published his brilliant essays on music, and Murr was the real name of his own cat. Gogol's dogs in the *Diary* had, of course, no relation to reality, nor did their "writings." Regardless of its initial designs, the *Diary of a Madman* is clearly a masterpiece in its own right, perfectly reflecting not only Gogol's own crisis, but also convincingly tracing the humorous, yet tragic, progress of a perfectly average Petersburg clerk to the point when he can imagine himself to be the King of Spain and hear dogs talking. Firmly anchored in the world of the 1830s, there is nonetheless a touch of modernity in the tale's focus on the absurdity of human existence.

If Dostoevskij's narrator's relation to Poprishchin can be thought of as reminiscent of Gogol's polar opposition between a gifted narrator-monk-poet and a lunatic, than it might behoove us to compare Dostoevskij's text to Gogol's implicitly serious creation. Upon such comparison, one can indeed see that there are many general topics Gogol's and Dostoevskij's narrators share and feel confident to talk about. Both profess ability, indeed a calling, to address various topics of larger-than-life significance: poetry, prose, architecture, painting, history and culture. Of course, in writing on such topics, Dostoevsky does not use Gogol's incessant proclivity to engage in a flight of hyperbolic fancy, "reaching for the moon," so to speak.²⁶ But, just as Gogol' before him, Dostoevskij seems confident in passing ultimate

²⁴Incidentally, Hoffman in the preface to the book, introduces a term "Katerbuch," literally a "tomcat book," which is related, as L. J. Kent correctly notes, analogous with *Kateridee*, slang for a "crazy idea," a crazy book. (Cf. E.T. A. Hoffmann: *Selected Writings*, vol 2. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1969, p. 5).

²⁵It must be noted that Gogol, just as Hoffmann, felt unappreciated as a child, admitted to hearing the Devil's and other voices in his head, and it is thus apparently no accident that he was—as it has been pointed out on numerous occasions—under the influence of Hoffmann's amazing creative output.

²⁶Gogol' himself realized it in his creation of Khlestakov, one of the most merciless auto-portrayals in Russian literature, and specifically the character with which Dostoevskij renews his *Diary* in 1876 in the very first sentence.

judgments on anything, ranging from social concerns to artistic expression. Concerning the latter, for instance, it is quite clear that if Gogol' adores Brjulov, Dostoevskij loves Kuindzhi, Makovskij, and Repin; if Gogol' instructs his readers how false it is to paint for large amounts money, Dostoevskij even names such painters (Jakobi and Ge); if Gogol' understands art as a nationally determined process, apparently borrowing this idea from Herder, Dostoevskij voices the same idea (a couple of entries after "Bobok" in "Po povodu vystavki" (when he speaks about the impossibility to translate Gogol' and Pushkin into French, applying this notion to the visual arts):

Slovom, vsio xarakternoe, vsio nashe natsional'noe po preimushchestvu (*a stalo byt'*, *vsio istinno khudozhestvennoe*), po moemu mneniiu, dlia Evropy neuznavamo. (PSSD, XXI, 69, italics mine)

Even the techniques they use to bridge the phenomenal and metaphysical worlds are similar. Gogol's fogs and other vapors, prevalent in various parts of *Arabesques*, are put to use by Dostoevskij early in the development of his persona as a writer-diarist, already in "Peterburgskie snovidenija v stixax i v proze" (Petersburg Dreams in Verse and Prose):²⁷

Pomniu, raz, v zimnij ianvar'skij vecher, ia speshil s Vyborgskoj storony k sebe domoj[...]i brosil pronzitel'nyj vzgliad vdol' reki v *dymnuu*, morozno-*mutnuu* dal[...] *Merzlyj par valilsia* s ustalykh loshadej, s begushchix liudej. Szhatyj *vozdukh drozhal* ot malejshego zvuka, i slovno velikany, so vsekh krovel' obeikh nabereznykh *podymalis'* i *neslis'* *vverkh* po kholodnomu nebu *stolpy dyma*, *spletaias'* i *raspletaias'* v doroge, tak chto, kazalos', novye zdaniia vstavali nad starymi, *novyj gorod skladyvalsia* v *vozdukhe*....Kazalos', nakonec, chto ves' etot mir, so vseimi zhil'tsami ego [...] poxodit na fantasticheskuiu grezu, na son, kotoryj v svoiu ochered' ischeznet i *iskuritsia parom* k temno-sinemu nebu. (PSSD, XIX, 69)²⁸

²⁷Let us also note here that this essay, one of his first probing techniques of a diarist, is called *dreams*. It can be understood as related to his many other "dream" creations in the *Diary of the Writer*, and most particularly to "Son smeshnogo cheloveka," in a similar way as Gogol's serious narrator's "dreams" are related to those of his "madman."

²⁸This passage is noted by Donald Fanger in "Dostoevsky's Early Feuilletons: Approaches to a Myth of the City," in *Slavic Review*, Vol.XXII, No. 3 (September, 1963, pp.469-482) as central in the body of journalism published by Dostoevskij between 1847 and 1873 not only for being "curiously reminiscent of passages from Custine and Gogol" and "evidently representing Dostoevsky's discovery of the 'fantastic' city" (p.481), but just as importantly for "the creation of a narrative stance, a quasi-fictional 'I,'" (p. 482), which will be, of course, used in his *Diary of a Writer* to a great extent indeed.

Similarly, in the fictional parts of the *Diary*, such as in "Mal'chik u Khrista na elke," Dostoevskij used air-related images to bridge the tripartite depiction of the boy protagonist in (1.) the "underground," (2.) on the "street level" and (3.) in his seeming "above-ground" existence, while depicting the cold reality of the boy's life, slipping away like a dream, in the final seconds of his temporal existence:

1. Mereshchitsia mne, byl v podvale mal'chik [...] *Dykhanie ego vyletalo parom*, i on, sidia v uglu na sunduke, ot skuki narocno *puskal par etot izo-rta* i zabavliasia smotria, kak on *vyletaet*...
2. *Merzlyj par valit* ot zagnannykh loshadej, iz *zharko dyshashchikh* mord ikh.
3. Prisel on i skorchilsia, a sam *otdyshat'sia* ne mozhet ot strakhu i vdrug, sovsem vdrug [...] emu poslyshalos', chto nad nim *zapela* ego mama pesenku [...] *prosheptal* nad nim vdrug tikhij golos. (XXII, 14-16)

Of course, Dostoevskij used framing by mists in his major fiction as well, such as in his *Idiot* which begins with the following paragraph:

V kontse noiabria, v ottepel', chasov v deviat' utra, poezd Peterburgsko-Varshavskoj zheleznoj dorogi na *vsex parakh* podkhodil k Peterburgu. Bylo tak *syro i tumanno*, chto *nasilu rassvelo*... v desiati shagakh, vpravo i vlevo ot dorogi, *trudno bylo razgliadet' khot' chto-nibud'* iz okon vagona [...]u vsekh otiazheleli za noch' glaza, vse *naziablis'*, vse litsa byli blednozheltye, *pod tsvet tumana*.

While in *The Idiot* this opening paragraph has its unique structural meaning for the novel itself,²⁹ let us just note for our purposes that during his "descent" from the Swiss mountains into the Russian plains, Prince Myshkin in his steaming train encounters Russia not only as foggy, but also as cold. "Zjabko?" ("Chilly?") is the very first word used by a character (Rogozhin) in the novel, repeating the narrator's "*nazjablis*" underscored in the first paragraph. It appears that a cold, or snow-laden setting was one of Dostoevsky's favorite devices in modulating from one level of reality to another (his crowning achievement, the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, ends with a winter scene of Iljushechka's burial), or between dissimilar levels of narration in diary formats: in addition to the above mentioned winter scenes in "Peterburgskie snovidenija" and "Mal'chik u Khrista na elke," one can easily recollect instances of such modeling in works such as

²⁹It provides the pulse for the movement of its narrative, rushing from the depiction of the fast train, itself exuding clouds of vapors, riding through a thicket of fogs (as in the famous painting by Manet of the roughly same period) toward the stasis of the final chapter which, despite its nocturnal setting, is remarkable for its stark clarity of both physical and emotional detail.

Notes from Underground, where Part I is tied onto Part II with the phrase "Po povodu mokrago snega" (Apropos of the wet snow), or, back in "Bobok," in which the diarist, after his prolonged exposure to the cold, wet cemetery and listening to "the dead," sneezes ("chikhaet"), thus breaking up the scene.³⁰

Of course, images related to the obfuscation of vision by fogs only intensify Gogol's favorite arabesque device "i vse dal'nejshee tut pokryvaetsja tumanom," which he often used in fictive narration. In Dostoevskij's case, however, the interest was not so much in the device itself, but in its potency which allowed Gogol to *fuse* the world framed by his narrative with the world framed by his ideals (as expressed, for instance in "Skul'ptura, Zhivopis' i Muzyka," in which Gogol introduces the essence of the art of painting by the simile "Vot mel'kajut, kak v oblachnom tumane, dlinnye galerei" and ends it with the sentence "Ona [zhivopis'] soedinjaet chuvstvennoe s dukhovnym"; PSSG, VIII, 11). Such blurring in "perepletenie real'nogo i ideal'nogo nachala" (PSSD, XV, 401) is particularly evident in Dostoevskij's diary formats and just as often applied to his non-fictive voice of narrator-diarist.

Returning to "Mal'chik u Xrista na Elke" as an example of Dostoevskij's "post-bobok" and more profound experiment with the power of punning, it is important to stress that it serves as an effective example of arabesque modeling by Dostoevskij not only within the story itself, but in its relation to the texts in its immediate proximity and, ultimately, to the entire *Diary*. The story is sandwiched between two other, supposedly non-fictional stories about little boys, forming a triad of inter-related entries which exhaust the confines of Chapter II in *Dnevnik Pisatelja*, published in January, 1876. Parenthetically, let us note that this was the first issue of the *Diary* under Dostoevskij's full control as editor, thus, in its programmatic sense, more important for the author than any other in this genre.³¹ One of

³⁰Within *Idiot*, the initial allusion to cold has, of course profound significance for its ending chapter when Prince Myškin shivers continuously for reasons other and much more serious than just atmospheric cold.

³¹We should further note that while tied to other stories about little boys within the chapter, it also is tied by the topic of Christmas and Children to the first chapter of the same journal (particularly to the section "III. Elka v klube khudozhnikov. Deti mysljashchie i deti oblegchaemye..."), to "Peterburgskie snovidenija," written fourteen years earlier by much of the

the major elements joining the three stories about the little boys is the term "ruchka" (a little hand) which appears in various permutations of its meaning throughout the chapter. If the first entry, entitled "Mal'chik s ruchkoj," is devoted to the narrator's ironic commentary on how quickly real-life boys learn to transform one figurative sense of the expression "s ruchkoj," meaning *asking for alms* (*prosit' milostyniu*), to its alternate sense of *stealing* (*vorovat'*), Dostoevskij's second story allows us to gain focus on his inter-textual arabesque modeling by realizing that, despite its given title, "Mal'chik u Xrista na Elke," the story could have been just as well entitled once more "Mal'chik s ruchkoj," since it explores, in a much fuller and poetic way, the multiple other meanings, possible in connection with the initial story's "tekhnicheskij termin" as he calls it (PSSD, XXII, 13), but now in a painfully stark detail of the physical use of "little hands":

1. *Oshchupav* litso mamy, on podivilsia, chto ona takaia zhe kholodnaia, kak stena. „Ochen' uzh zdes' kholodno“, - podumal on , postoiial nemnogo, *zabyv ruku* na pleche pokojnicy, potom dokhnul na svoi *pal'chiki*, chtob otogret' ikh, i vdrug, *nashariv* na narakh svoi kartuzishko, potikhon'ku *oshchup'iu*, poshel iz podvala.

2. [...] i tak bol'no stalo vdrug *pal'chikam* [...] a u nego uzhe *pal'chiki* i na nozhkakh i *na rukakh* stali *sovsem krasnye*, uzh *ne sgibaiutsia* i *bol'no poshevelit'* [...] Odná barynia podoshla poskoree i *sunula* emu *v ruku* kopeechku [...] a kopeechka tut zhe vykatilas' i zazvenela po stupen'kam: ne mog on *sognut' svoi krasnye pal'chiki* [...] i bezhit, bezhit i *na ruchki duet* [...] Vdrug emu pochudilos' chto szadi ego kto-to *skhvatil* za khalatik: bol'shoj zloj mal'chik stoial podle i vdrug *tresnul* ego po golove, *sorval* kartuz [...]

3. Prisel on i skorchilsia, a sam otdyshat'sia ne mozhet ot strakhu i vdrug, *sovsem* vdrug, stalo emu tak khorosho: *ruchki* i nozhki vdrug perestali bolet' i stalo tak teplo, tak teplo emu poslyshalos', chto nad nim zapela ego mama pesenku...

-Pojdem ko mne na elku, mal'chik, - prosheptal nad nim vdrug tikhij golos [...] kto-to nagnulsia nad nim i *obnial* ego v temnote, a on *protianul emu ruku* i...i vdrug, - o, kakoj svet! O kakaia elka! [...] [to vse mal'chiki i devochki [...] letaiut, vse oni tseluiut ego, *berut* ego, *nesut* s soboiu [...] vse oni teper' kak angely u Khrista, i on sam posredi ikh, i *prostiraet k nim ruki*, i *blagoslovliaet* ikh i ikh greshnykh materej [...] [k kotorym oni podletaiut], *celuiut* ikh, *utiraiut im slezy svoimi ruchkami*[...] (XXII, 14-17)

same imagery, and to "Elka i svat'ba," written yet another fourteen years earlier, not only by some of the same subject matter, but also by the generic subtitle of the latter: "Iz zapisok *neizvestnogo*."

As one can see from the density of underscored images, the term "s ruchkoj" receives in "Mal'chik u Xrista na Elke" a far more expressive range than the simple dichotomy of its meaning given in the first entry. This incredible range of permutations connected with the use of hands used in a story with an *a priori* fictive content mathes the range of the word "seemingly," which Dostoevskij first underscores as *kazhetsia* at the beginning of the story. He also uses its close synonym, "mereshchitsia," "neverojatno slyшат'," or "snjatsja," all of which reduce the tension between the composed "reality" and its "represented" counterpart (sobytiya dejstvitel'nye), the technique remains the same.

At the same time, by essentially inverting the rhetorical substance of the famous ending in Gogol's "Nose" (which in its 1842 version read: "Kto chto ni govori, a podobnye proisshestvija byvajut na svete; redko, no byvajut"),³² Dostoevskij achieves both, the "seemingly" non-fictive effect in the first item in his triad of stories in Chapter II ("dazhe takie peredajut ob nix veshchi, chto neverojatno slyшат', i odnako iae, vse fakty") and the "apparently" fictive of the second ("Na to ja i romanist, chtob vydumyvati'."). Having evoked in his readers' minds the possibility that the fate of the poor and abused orphan boy, so movingly expressed in his second story, just "might," after all his suffering and death by freezing in snow, turn for the better amidst the "angel-children," Dostoevskij, sarcastically and rather cruelly, returns to the motif of "angels" in the first sentence of the third part in a punning allusion: "Na tretij den' prazdnika ia videl vsekh etikh 'padshikh' angelov, celykh piat'desiat vmeste." (PSSD, XXII, 17) While this story, entitled "Kolonija maloletnikh prestupnikov" (the title continues over the next four lines in an eighteenth-century fashion), deceptively reads like a simply crafted reportage, not at all concerned with generating further uses of hand-related images, Dostoevskij cunningly explores their physical and figurative uses in such topics as the sexual deviance by the boys, "hand-manufacturing" therapy for little criminals, the effect of removal of "telesnye nakazaniya" (done, of course, by hands).

³²Commenting on the revised version of "Nose," Belinskij had the following to say about it: "ÆNos - [toť arabesk, nebrečno nabrosannyj karanda;om velikogo masťera, znawitel'no i k luw;emu izmenen v svoej razv\zke." (as quoted in N. V. Gogol', *Sobranie khudo\estvennyx proizvedenij v pjati tomakh*. v. III (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1960), p. 485. By doing so Belisky seems to have been one of the first Russian literary critics to not only recognize the thematic proximity of "Nose" to *Arabesques*, but also its *generic substance*.

Continuous reworking of the "little hand" motif in Chapter II, composed of three differently titled stories, each of which explores varied *punning* realizations of the term "s ruchkoj," represents nothing less than Dostoevskij's leap into the world of arabesque weaving. This technique allowed the author to reduce the tension between the presumably *composed* reality of "Mal'chik u Xrista na Elke" and, at least presumably, *represented* reality ("sobytiia dejstvitel'nyia") in the other two stories about "mal'chiki," loosely framing it from both ends as parts I and III. In this context, it is noteworthy to turn to Vinitsky's finding that in Dostoevsky's article "Vlas," which directly precedes "Bobok" in the 1873 *Diary*, "Dostoevskij ridicules the expressive folkloric 'vision of hell' that Nikolai Nekrasov depicted in his poem 'Vlas.'"³³ What Vinitsky does not observe, however, is that in the article "Vlas", just as in the article "Smiatennyj vid," which immediately follows it (and in which Dostoevskij takes issue with Leskov's representation of Russian folk in "The Sealed Angel"), Dostoevskij represents his *own views* on the subject of the Russian folk sense of the "highest Truth" (vysshaia pravda) (Cf. PSSD, XXI, 58) rather than in the *composed* reality about the "underground's truth" as reported by "odno litso" overhearing Lebeziatnikov's narrative about Platon Nikolaevich's philosophy:

On ob"iasniaet vse eto samym prostym faktom, imenno tem, chto naverkhu, kogda my eshche zhili, to schitali *oshibochno* tamoshniuiu smert' za smert'. (PSSD, XXI, 51; emphasis mine, AL)

Moreover what unites Dostoevsky's *represented* reality about Russian folk in both articles, "Vlas" and "Smiatennyj vid," is his utter belief that Russian folk has an innate need for suffering "stradaniem svoim russkij narod naslazhdaetsia" (PSSD, XXI, 36) and it is on account of such need that it will be saved. Such miracle is especially likely for Dostoevskij after the 19 February, 1861 (the date is underscored in both articles) when the Russian peasants were freed:

...vsia lozh', esli tol'ko est' lozh', vyskochit is serdtsa narodnogo[...]Vo vsiakom sluchae nasha nesostoiatel'nost' kak "ptentsov gnezda Petrova" v nastoiashchij moment nesomnenna. Da ved' deviatnadsatym fevralem i zakonchilsia po nastoiashchemu petrovskij period russkoj istorii, tak chto my vstupili v polnejshuiu neizvestnot'. (PSSD, XXI, 41; emphasis mine, AL)

³³Vinitsky, op. cit., 539.

In this context we must understand that "Bobok," which immediately follows these concluding words of "Vlas" explores the "utter uncertainty" of the post-Petrine order for the Russian aristocrats—"ptentsy gnezda Petrova" (a quote from Pushkin's *Poltava* which Dostoevskij often used referring to them)—who, unlike the Russian folk, know not the suffering of the Russian simple folk, but still know the Petrine *Table of Ranks*, which they find to their surprise intact even in their newly found, subterranean "life after death." In this regard—in their lack of the need to suffer in order to savor their individuality—these new "men from underground" substantially differ from Dostoevskij's more famous creation, cited at the outset of our study, and represent an entirely new definition and cognition of man without God. On the other hand, the men in "Bobok" are even more tied to the "stealth" topic, uniting all three seemingly separate entries in Dostoevskij's *1873 Diary*—"Vlas", "Bobok," and "Smiatennyj vid"—into a sequential triad of texts exploring the meaning of the "ultimate Truth", which the new "underground men" in the post-Petrine cemetery find not in "Bobok," but in their newly found "freedom" to shed off their ranks and become shamelessly naked (*obnazhit'sia bez styda*). To minimize the tension between the narrator of the less fictional reality in "Smiatennyj vid," which follows the narrator of presumably more fantastic reality of "Bobok," Dostoevskij returns again to the narrator of "Bobok" immediately after the article on "Smiatennyj vid" in the eighth entry of his *Diary* "Polpis'ma 'odnogo litsa'." In this way—the just like the "little hand" motif does in his 1876 *Diary*, as discussed above, the "arabesque" weaving of his entries continues in earnest.

Since Gogol' did not conceive of *Arabesques* as a periodical, he did not bother to develop narrative techniques of connecting his "non-fictional" essays in the same way as Dostoevskij did. Rather, they were connected by the persona of the narrator, himself all too eager and willing to break free from the wrinkles of everyday existence and embellish it by the ebullience of his hyperbolic rhetoric. In addition, the various subsections of his *Arabesques*, whether fictive or factual, already stood in their implicit relatedness—indeed, due to their title, in their explicit intertwined union.

To Dostoevskij's mind, one of the most stable and visible attributes of the devil is that he stands for the opposite of the just discussed subject ("sovershennaja pravda")—he is a liar. The more one lies, the closer one is to meeting the actual devil (it is for that reason that he has Ivan meet one at

the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*). Dostoevskij most often relies on the authority of Gogol' whenever he is about to engage either the concept of the devil or that of a liar. His very first entry in the 1876 *Diary* is a turn to Gogol's most famous personification of a liar in the figure of Khlestakov:

...Khlestakov, po krajnej mere, vral-vral u gorodnichogo, no vse zhe kapel'ku boialsia, chto vot ego voz'mut i vytolkaiut iz gostinoj. Sovremennye Khlestakovy nichego ne boiatsia i vrut s polnym spokojstviem. (XXII, 5)

Despite the jocular-ironic tone of these lines, the fact that Dostoevskij began his 1876 *Diary* by quoting Gogol meant that, in his private universe, he saw the whole of Russia about to fall under the spell of the forces of evil: contemporary society is seen as an incarnation of Gogol's still fictional universe, which depicted the Hades of the seeming, everyday reality in Russia with a heretofore unknown power. The ellipsis marked by three dots before Khlestakov's name at the beginning of his 1876 *Diary* is, perhaps, the most telling graphic example of his use of arabesque modelling in order to establish the connection between Gogol's fictive universe and Dostoevskij's own, non-fictive Russia, which he apparently sees as teaming with "contemporary Khlestakovs" who are in turn, due to their improved ability to lie, not only Khlestakovs incarnate, but indeed the *Devils*, as he called them in 1873.³⁴ At the same time, such ellipsis suggests a continuation of concerns represented in his 1876 *Diary* with those of his 1873 *Diary*, the last two entries of which directly alluded to the topic of lying in their titles: "Nechto o vran'e" and "Odna iz sovremennykh fal'shej" (PSSD, XXI, 117-136). If in the last essay the author defends his *Besy* as an accurate expression of disturbing facets he sees in Russia's contemporary reality, and uses the penultimate essay to define his understanding of the "ultimate reality" as well as its connection to Gogol's world. His two most important answers to a question "Otchego u nas vse lgut do edinogo?" with which he starts his essay are found in the following lines:

[...] u nas sovershenno utratilas' aksioma, chto istina poetichnee vsego, chto est' v svete, osobenno v samom chistom svoem sostoianii... malo togo, dazhe fantastichnee vsego, chto mog by nalgat' sebe povadlivyj um chelovecheskij. V Rossii istina pochti vseгда imeet kharakter vpolne fantasticheskij. V samom dele, liudi sdelaali nakonec to, chto vsio, chto nalzhet um chelovecheskij, im uzhe gorazdo

³⁴The connection between "khlestakovshchina" and the novel *Besy* was established by N. F. Budanova, "Problema 'otcov i detej' v romane *Besy*," in Dostoevskij. *Materialy i issledovaniia*. 1. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1974), pp. 164-188. (Cf. also PSSD, XII, 203-4 and PSSD, XXII, 315)

poniatnee istiny [...] i ee oni ne berut, a gonaiuetsia za pridumannym, imenno potomu, chto ee-to i schitaiut fantastichnym ili utopicheskim.

Vtoroe, na chto nashe vseobshchee russkoe lgan'e namekaet, eto to, chto my vse stydimsia samikh sebia. (PSSD, XXI, 119, emphasis mine)

Having defined the concept of "istina" not only as the most "poetic," but also the most "fantastic" form of imagination (hence, the theoretical basis of his own poetics) and naturally akin to what he envisioned as the pristine form of Russian character, Dostoevskij identifies contemporary Russian lying as a result of a substitution for "istina" of the more accessible products of a rational mind—especially rationally thought out lies, as long as they are sufficiently fantastic or utopian to be accepted by the Russian soul, thirsting for the fantastic. For Dostoevsky Russia's most capable interlocutor with that "wrong-headed" fantastic was Gogol, but to Dostoevskij's mind the line separating Gogol's persona from his timeless liar-protagonists was thin indeed. In his 1876 *Diary*, Dostoevsky uses Gogol's authority, to be sure, still in a facetious tone, as a "proof" of the existence of devils: "Gogol' pishet v Moskvu s togo sveta utverditel'no, chto èto cherti. Ia chital pis'mo, slog ego. "(PSSD, XXII, 32). This quote appears in the section entitled "Spiritizm. Nechto o chertiakh. Chrezvychajnaia khitrost' chertej, esli tol'ko èto cherti" of Chapter III, which (just as the concluding essays of his 1873 *Diary*) mostly concerns itself with other manifestations of falsehoods and lies, including those concerning his own biography. Dostoevskij, perhaps swayed by the superpositive aura with which he adorned Pushkin, could not provide the same halo for such a different writer, as Gogol clearly was. While fully realizing Gogol's genius—indeed, precisely on account of such realization—Dostoevskij became prisoner of his own dialectic, which contemplated *genius* chiefly in the good/evil opposition. Gogol's uncanny ability to depict liars in such personages as Pirogov, Khlestakov, or Chichikov was often seen by Dostoevskij as reflective of Gogol's persona, and it is apparently for this reason that he endowed Gogol' with semi-demonic powers as early as in 1861:

Byli u nas i demony, *nastoiashchie demony*... ikh bylo dva, i kak my liubili ikh, kak do six por my ikh liubim i cenim! Odin iz nikh vsé smeialsia... on smeialsia vsiu zhizn' i nad soboj i nad nami, i my vse smeialis' za nim, do togo smeialis', chto nakonec stali plakat' ot smekha. On postig naznachenie poruchika Pirogova...on iz propavshej u chinovnika shineli sdelał nam uzhasnuiu tragediiu. On rasskazal nam v trekh strokakh vsego riazanskogo poruchika, - vsego, do poslednej chertochki. [...] *O eto byl takoj kolossal'nyj demon*, kotorogo u vas nikogda ne byvalo v Evrope

i ktoromu vy by, mozhet byt' i ne pozvolili byt' u sebia. (emphasis mine, PSSD, XVIII, 59)

Whether he invented, in his 1873 *Diary*, the future "shameless" adventures of Pirogov (containing Pirogov's proposal to get married and his proposal "tragically" accepted) which Gogol', of course, did not compose, but which he used as the ultimate proof of a peculiarly Russian newly born indecency ("Nechto o vran'e," PSSD, XXI, 124-5), or saw Gogol's creations of Derzhimorda, Korobochka and Sobakevich as somehow less reflective of positive genius, the implicit corollary message remained the same as the one expressed in 1861: Gogol' was a genius of the demonic, rather than Christian world.

This association of Gogol with the predominantly evil side in Dostoevskij's interpretation was, of course, hardly fair to Gogol whose *Arabesques* were also a showcase of his reach for the extraordinary—the very thing, which Dostoevskij's diarist could only intimate. Gogol's intent in those entries, which take place outside Peterburg was to *bring nearer* examples of genius not only as exemplified in Pushkin, but also in Al-Momoun, Schloezer, Mueller, and Herder, and his fictional "little folk," are cases of wasted genius precisely because they all live in Petersburg. What Dostoevskij failed to recognize throughout his lifetime was that there was a genuinely *quixotic* side to Gogol's narrator in *Arabesques*, - an image, which is far closer to Gogol's inner beliefs than any demonism with which Dostoevskij associated him in his own feuilletons. It was this *quixotic* side of Gogol's in seeing beyond "the physicality of the windmills," which Dostoevsky seemed to ignore or forget when he characterized Gogol. Victor Terras not long ago observed that "the metaphysics of Nonbeing, like the metaphysics of Being, is absolute, meaning that it lacks a psychological dimension."³⁵ If so, then it was apparently Dostoevskij's own preoccupation with the "psychological dimension," begun and sustained ever since his *Poor Folk* was written, which might have prevented him to attain such absolute states of Being, as those depicted by Gogol in his *Nativity scene* shown at the outset of Part II of his *Arabesques* in a section titled "Life" (Zhizn') or in "Rome," which is cited by Terras as an example "of the ascent of the soul

³⁵Victor Terras, "Nabokov and Gogol: The Metaphysics of Nonbeing" in *Poetica Slavica: Studies in Honour of Zbigniew Folejewski*, ed. by J. D. Clayton and G. Schaarschmidt (Ottawa: U. of Ottawa Press, 1981), 195.

toward beauty and resurrection."³⁶ This manner of *accepting* the world from the perspective of an enchanted observer who lacks psychological dimension and cannot stop listing its details by having his energetic brush fill landscapes of "life," reaching beyond its margins to share in the "metaphysics of Being" is, in fact, Gogol's inimicable *forte*.³⁷

It is also Gogol's *forte* on account of what Professor Terras alluded to in his heretofore unpublished letter: For all his fears of the Devils—the tricksters who obscure the Divine in this world, there is never any doubt on

³⁶*ibid.*

³⁷Cathy Popkin recently opined in *The Pragmatics of Insignificance: Chekhov, Zoshchenko, Gogol*. (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1993) that "it is frustrating to read Gogol" (p. 132). Her frustration, which came chiefly from her inability to find "discernable significance" in what she presumed to be Gogol's "excessive discourse," quickly turned into an invective in her study. Firm in her belief that she had an unimpeachable right to develop a *reading strategy*, in which her "own intentions have not been to identify Gogol's, but simply to find a way of tolerating the textual morass," she ended with an assertion that "the Gogolian text must be viewed as a *Gallehault* that serves the interest of one party only, the autoerotic text-generator who writes and writes but never delivers" (pp. 208-9). Yet, Gogol had already delivered to the point of being the only writer in Russia, in whose honor an entire period of Russian literary history was named and, perhaps, a little modesty about her own abilities to understand Gogol's craft might have been appropriate. In any case, admitting her own "tendency to make my rhetorical flourishes substance," she left the door wide open to apply the image of the "autoerotic text-generator who writes and writes but never delivers" to her own piece on Gogol. Sadly, identifying Gogol's intentions, or perhaps even his other abilities, such as producing some of the most *compact* characterizations of characters, which leave both Chexov and Zoshchenko (with all due respects to their craft) in the dust, and which left those, cognizant of the "results" his fiction had already accomplished (such as Dostoevskij, for instance), agasp in wonder, - all these abilities of Gogol's were simply ignored in her "study." Such wanton disregard of the objective evidence left by the author himself in his art, and just as objective evidence of the effect of his art recorded by history, cannot be covered by an impressive bibliography, suggesting "scholarly" aspirations. Anyhow, almost none of the items, except for the favorite few she quotes, are given sufficient voice to be convinced that she has read them, or even cared to read them. Rather, her *apriori* intent seems to have been an almost pathological need to find Gogol at fault for her inability "to make sense of it all" or, even better, his ability in "arousing desire it [his fiction] refuses to satisfy" in her, leaves one in wonder as to what kind of "desire" and "satisfaction" she is talking about. If her only therapeutic treatment for Gogol and for herself is of the kind "when Dante's lovers opt instead [of reading] for a real consummation of their desires," which she proscribes at the end, then indeed it is better for her not to threaten Gogol's enthusiasts that she, following Dante's Francesca might "care to 'read no more' of Gogol's infinite discursive embroidery, but eagerly embrace" whoever she deems desirable in such consummations (pp. 209 and 213). Perhaps, but this might be the wildest of speculations, her threat includes "to write no more" on Gogol. If so, it just might come as a welcome relief to some and, indeed unlike Gogol's, the quickest way to satisfy the already "aroused desires" in this regard.

Gogol's part "that there is God," as Terras maintains in one of the epigraphs to this study. Dostoevskij the diarist, on the other hand, is hardly engaged in what he set out to accomplish as his ultimate purpose: creating the most fantastic states of Being, so as to let his readers "touch the Truth," which is—as he seems so adamantly convinced—almost within his grasp. Instead, almost as his protagonist in *Notes from Underground*, he becomes caught in endless labyrinths of probing the substance of meaning of ordinary words and acts; he intimates having extraordinary knowledge, but uses as his examples the wrongful acts, lies and murders of the ordinary *demos*. Moreover, if, as Terras maintains, "Dostoevsky stands before God and demands justice—on his, human, Russian terms, and reserves the right not to accept God's world," then he casts a plethora of his character into a world without any God—something, which Gogol apparently could not imagine. Such is his world in *Notes from Underground* and even more so in his "Bobok." The story engages the same question, which Derzhavin's poetic persona asks in "Na smert' Kn. Meshcherskago," almost a century earlier, namely when he turns to the corpse and asks a most profound question:

Kuda, Meshcherskoj! ty sokrylsia?
 Ostavil ty sej zhizni breg,
 K bregam ty mertvykh udalilsia;
 Zdes' perst' tvoia, a dukha net.
 Gde zh on? —On tam. —Gde tam? — Ne znaem.

Meshchersky! Where art thou now faring?
 You have forsaken this life's shore,
 With shores where dwell the dead your bearing;
 Here is the dust, but not the soul;
 Where is it? *Gone*. Gone where? *We know not*.

Derzhavin's profundity lies in his ability to ask a question, to which there is *a priori* no answer, but which needs to be stated anyhow, in order to express the paradox of God's world, the meaning of which is only partly revealed to a man. It arises as a result of a semi-complete answer given to the first question asked regarding the location of the departed Meshchersky's *spirit* (dukh, translated above for the needs of rhyming as the *soul*). When asked of its whereabouts "Gde zh on?" Derzhavin's poetic persona provides an answer, placing the departed Spirit onto some intangible, but still possible to

imagine shore of the dead— "tam." The follow-up absurd question "Gde tam?" brings the poet to the laconic answer—"ne znaem."³⁸

It is the punning with the same word "dukh," (which Derzhavin used in a singular way in 1779 in order to formulate a statement about the absurdity of our life's bearing) which is at the base of one decoding of Dostoevsky's cemetery masterpiece. In Dostoevsky's case the punning is given very early in the story in the following manner:

Khodil razvlekat'sia, popal napokhorony. [...] Let dvadcat' piat', ia dumaiu, ne byval na kladbishche; vot eshche mestechko!

Vo pervykh, dukh. Mertvetsov piatnadstat' ponaekhlo. [...] No dukh, dukh. Ne zhelal by byt' zdeshnim dukhovnym litsom. [PSSD; XXI,43]

Dostoevskij's punning here with the word "dukh" involves at least its two primary meanings: One, in its vulgar sense, as a "bad smell" at the cemetery, or simply the "stench," and its other, sacred meaning, connoting, just as in Derzhavin's usage—the Spirit, appearing as the root of the word cluster

³⁸Dostoevskij might have had yet another "Poet of the Underground" in mind, namely Mikhail Matveich Kheraskov, who is mostly remembered for the first Russian epic "Rossiada" (1779), but who was also the first Russian to engage the "poetry of the underground" in composing "The Sonnet with an Epitaph" in 1755. It was written from the vantage point of the deceased, speaking from his grave and the title was thus explained. On the one hand this work demonstrated his alertness to contemporary European interest in the "graveyard" topics and cultivation of *sentiment* in poetry (Thomas Gray's famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," which made such topics officially recognized in English literature, was published four years earlier and also ended with an Epitaph), on the other, the *Sonnet* was one of the first instances reflecting Kheraskov's subsequently intense allegiance to the Masonic movement. Although Dostoevskij might not have known this specific Kheraskov's text, he certainly knew of the general Masonic initiation rituals of spending a night or two alive in a grave or a coffin, so that a new initiate could—following such mock burrial—rise to a new "path of Enlightenment" in the brotherhood. Dostoevskij also knew well the closely connected Baroque motif of *vanitas vanitatum*, which was implicit in the *Sonnet*, and revived in Kheraskov's own journals of the early 1760s and his *Pocherpnutyia mysli iz Ekklesiasta* (Thoughts Gathered from *Ecclesiastes*), published in 1765 as free variation on both, the *Book of Ecclesiastes* from the Bible and its version by Voltaire. Having the device of speaking from the grave, as if underscoring the notion in *Ecclesiastes* about "all things returning to their sources," gave the new "dialogues of the dead" genre an incredibly seductive rhetorical appeal for Russian writers of the 1760s. Such titles of his journals, as the *Useful Enjoyment*, or *Pleasant and Useful Passing of Time* of others, underscored the didactic mission Russian eighteenth-century Masons embraced, namely their utilitarian belief that literature could and should instruct the general reading public to embrace the path of moral improvement ("ispravlenie nravov"). In this sense their mission was not much different than that espoused by Chernyshevsky and other self-appointed followers of Belinsky in Dostoevskij's Russia of the 1860s.

dukhovnoe litso (which means a priest or a holy father). This simple and clear realization should finally bring to us to the decoding of the ultimate "mystery" word "bobok." The fact that is is a far more complex punning word than the term "dukh" at the outset of this macabre graveyard story is underscored by the multiple contributions devoted to the decoding of its enigmatic meaning, listed in the aforementioned study by Ilya Vinitsky.

Let us take Dostoevsky's nod seriously for the moment, and involve in our deliberations not just any poet, but a poet engaged in the Baroque search of "*sovmeshchenie nesovmestimogo*," as the famous Russian student of the Baroque had coined the term.³⁹ Our contention here is that the word "Bobok" appeared both familiar and strange to the Russian ear of Dostoevsky's time was on account that it had a "macaronic verse" function with respect to the encoded meaning imparted to the word by Dostoevsky. Its farcical nature should be clear to any western Slavic, since among the Western Slavic languages (Polish, Czech, Slovak) the word "bobok" carries to this day quite unambiguous *primary* meaning: it signifies that type of "bean-looking," round, small anal discharge that certain mammals, such as deers, rabbits or sheep daily eliminate from their bodies, or as *The Great Polish-English Dictionary* lists it to be *sheep or goat's droppings*.⁴⁰ As opposed to Russian, Polish and Czech languages have the historically predictable West-Slavic vocalization of their back jers from *bob"k"* into *bobek*, whereas a Slovak Dictionary lists it precisely, as it appears in Dostoevsky's story—*bobok*, citing it to be "trus mensich prezuvavcov al hlodavcov [napr. kozy, ovce, zajaca]." ⁴¹

Without exploring all of its other possible meanings in Russian (as has been quite productively done before), one can legitimately ask the question: How would Dostoevsky know either of the aforementioned languages? One can easily point to his acquaintance with the various "inorodtsy" in his Omsk prison incarceration, where he certainly met the Poles, "who constituted the majority of Omsk inmates in Dostoevsky's social class,"⁴² but he simply could have looked into a dictionary. Far more importantly,

³⁹Cf. A.A. Morozov. "Problema Barokko v russoj literature XVII-nachala XVIII vv.: *Russkaia literatura* #3 (1962), pp. 3-38.

⁴⁰Jan Stanislawski, *Wielki Słownik Polsko-Angielski I* (Warszawa: State Publ. House, 1975), p. 78.

⁴¹*Slovník Slovenského Jazyka*, I (Bratislava: Slovenska Akademia Ved, 1959), p. 108.

⁴²Cf. Elizabeth Blake. "Portraits of the Siberian Dostoevsky by Poles in the House of the Dead." *Dostoevsky Studies*, Vol X (2006), p. 56

ONLY this encoded and vulgar meaning satisfies the explanation which Klinevich seeks upon hearing the supposedly nonsensical word "bobok" and asks "Nu a kak zhe vot ia ne imeiu obonianiia, a slyshu von?" Reading the meaning of "bobok" in the suggested sense, was the only way to explain the "stench" which Klinevich smells, and which surrounds the narrator throughout this story. It was also an entirely plausible way to answer all those who, in Dostoevskij's understanding, professed too openly and exclusively materialistic values, and whom he had consistently lampooned in other ways earlier, such as in "The Crocodile, or Mauled in the Mall" (1865). Implicitly stated, Dostoevskij hinted in his "Bobok" that those who professed a belief in a world without God were fated to end up—after their death—as victims of their own beliefs, ending as heaps of decomposing, rejected matter. We can rest assured that they—as opposed to Dostoevsky himself—would not be granted an exit from their "House of the Dead" as the author of his first novel on the subject had prepared for its concluding paragraph: "Yes, God, go with you! Freedom, a new life, resurrection from the dead...What a glorious moment!"

Moreover, if "Bobok" was, in addition, to be taken as a veiled allusion to Gogol by the narrator's mention of "dve simmetricheskie borodavki na lbu" on his own portrait (clearly alluding to the devil's horns, but also to Gogol's portrait, since it was only Gogol of all Russian writers before Dostoevsky, who had publicly fretted over the portrait of his own persona to accompany future editions of his works in 1843), then Dostoevsky must have also seriously taken Gogol's dictum apropos of LOGOS, entered at the outset of this study in the Epigraph: "pust' uzhe luchshe razdaetsia gniloe slovo o gnilykh predmetakh." Finally, it was only Gogol before Dostoevsky, who in his arguably most famous Petersburg Tale, "The Overcoat," had used the adjective "hemmoroidal" to express the peculiar visage of Akakii Akakievich, which supposedly came about from the effects of the Petersburg climate. We may rest assured that Gogol knew very well the Biblical assurance that *God created man in his own image*. By fashioning a clerk's image in a story full of anal allusions, Gogol must have been expressing serious doubts about any man's survival in God's image in Petersburg—a city founded by a man's vision of a man's paradise, and, therefore, no longer the *City of God*. Since Dostoevsky later on called it "the most intentional city on Earth," it behooves us to suggest that in fashioning "Bobok" along the suggested lines of encoded punning, Dostoevsky implicitly provided his agreement with Gogol's own view of Peterburg's universe.

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„Alles ist Täuschung.“ Nabokovs Roman *Verzweigung* als Kunstkrimi

Der Dichter als Idol hat abgedankt. Moralische Botschaften sind aus der Mode. Wer sich heute durch die Literatur bewegt, folgt keinen zukunftsweisenden Visionen. Er folgt den subversiv gestreuten Spuren, die der Autor ihm legt. Der Autor ist kein Lebensdeuter, kein Vorbild, kein Prophet, dem man blind vertrauend folgen dürfte. Der Autor ist eine narratologische, keine moralische Instanz, und das von ihm Erzählte verhüllt sich in Verrätselung. Der Leser wird ein Detektiv, die Lektüre wird zur Schnitzeljagd und der Schriftsteller nur ab und an noch von der Politik auf den Sockel gehoben.¹ Blindes Übernehmen (recipere) gilt nicht mehr. Vielmehr lockt der Blick hinter die Kulissen. Da wundert es nicht, dass im letzten Jahr pünktlich zu Weihnachten ein Büchlein auf den Markt spazierte, das kein Blatt vor den Mund nimmt und alles ausspricht, was wir je erfahren wollten über die dunklen Seiten der Dichter und Denker: *Dichter beschimpfen Dichter* heißt die Sammlung zünftiger Zitate, die der Literaturwissenschaftler Jörg Drews hier zusammengetragen hat.² Neid, Nörgelei und Häme fließen flink aus flotten Federn, und so ist der reich illustrierte Band, wie der Klappentext kündigt, der „unentbehrliche Beleidigungs-Begleiter für jede Art von Buch-Arbeiter.“

Man muss im Buch der harten Urteile nicht lange suchen. Die gesammelten Gehässigkeiten sind brav alphabetisch geordnet, und früh findet sich, was man am liebsten gar nicht entdeckt hätte unter D wie Dante, Dickens, Diderot: „Dostojewskij ist der Pickel auf der Nase der russischen Literatur.“ Seine Romane sind „Gummizellen-Literatur“. Und:

¹ Im Oktober 2006 weihten Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel und der russische Präsident Vladimir Putin auf Initiative des Deutsch-Russischen Kulturinstituts e. V. in Dresden ein Dostoevskij-Denkmal ein.

² Drews 2006.

„Wie Sie richtig erkannt haben, sagt Dostojewskij, wenn er zu sich selbst spricht, in seinem Tagebuch [...], nichts als Dummheiten.“ Das alles ist natürlich ungünstig, jedenfalls aus Sicht der Deutschen Dostojewskij-Gesellschaft (DDG), die eben 2006 manches Jubiläum zu würdigen hatte.³ Doch nichts davon ist von Nabokov, dem Dostoevskij-Verächter *par excellence*. Die sich hier ärgern, heißen Ivan Turgenev, Paul Léautaud und Paul Celan. Und auch George Grosz bekennt ein wenig zu freimütig:

„Ich für meinen Teil kann dieses ‚innerliche‘ kotzige selbstquälerische kranke Zeug nicht lesen. Dostojewski war ja reiner Epileptiker – ich denke, das merkt man. [...] Dostojewski – Seelengeschmuse für höhere Töchter.“⁴

Vor diesem Hintergrund nimmt sich Nabokovs Polemik, die in einer solchen Sammlung natürlich nicht fehlt, fast gelassen aus: „Ich habe in der Tat einen heftigen Widerwillen gegen *Die Brüder Karamasow* und jene schauerhafte Fäselei mit dem Titel *Verbrechen und Strafe*.“ Doch wo die anderen Kollegen eher situativen Gelegenheitsschimpf von sich geben, handelt es sich bei Nabokovs Dostoevskij-Aversion um ein oft wiederholtes, argumentativ gestütztes und wissenschaftlich gut erforschtes Bekenntnis.⁵ Bei all dem spürt man aber auch, wenn man so durch die Seiten streift, einen Namen sucht und ihn nicht findet: Schlimmer als beschimpft zu werden, ist es, nicht erwähnt zu sein. Nichts ist so kränkend, nichts unerträglicher, als wenn der im Verborgenen gereifte Plan nicht aufgeht und das für genial gehaltene Werk beim Publikum kein Echo findet. Kein Künstler kann das wollen, nur hat sich mancher schon über den eigenen Wert getäuscht. Literarische Beleidigung ist langlebig und schädigend, aber doch nicht ganz so nachhaltig wie Mord, und so wollen wir die Fälle verbaler Attacken ausdehnen und uns einem Künstler zuwenden, der wortreiche Polemik mit mörderischer Potenz vereint. Ein Künstler, dessen Kollegenschelte es nicht bis ins Buch der beschimpften Bücher geschafft hat, obwohl auch er seine Vorgänger wortreich verachtet. Der ein Kunstwerk der Täuschung vollbringen will und dabei nur sich selbst hinters Licht führt. Keiner erkennt sein *opus magnum* als Kunstwerk, keiner seinen genialen

³ Die DDG hat 2006 den 185. Geburtstag Dostoevskijs mit mehreren Veranstaltungen geehrt und anlässlich des hundertjährigen Jubiläums der Piper-Gesamtausgabe eine Tagung zum Beginn der Dostoevskij-Rezeption in Deutschland durchgeführt. Den Ausklang gab eine Nabokov-Tagung an der Ev. Akademie Hofgeismar. Der vor-liegende Beitrag ist die bearbeitete Fassung meines dortigen Vortrags. Ich danke Herrn Prof. Dr. Horst-Jürgen Gerigk für die freundliche Aufnahme in die Dostoevsky Studies.

⁴ Drews 2006, 48.

⁵ Dolinin, Aleksandr: Nabokov, Dostoevskij i Dostoevščina, in: Ders.: *Istinnaja žizn' pisatelja Sirina. Rabote o Nabokove*, Sankt-Peterburg 2004, 199-213. Weitere Literatur im Anhang.

Verstand, den er lieber verliert als einzusehen, was die anderen in ihm sehen: Einen stümperhaften Mörder.

Ein Buch-Arbeiter auf der Flucht

Hermann Karlowitsch heißt der Held, der uns hier Sorgen macht, weil er eine Bluttat zelebriert wie ein fein gesponnenes Kunstwerk. Hermann ist gebürtiger Russe deutscher Abstammung und lebt wie so viele seiner Landsleute seit 1920 in Berlin. Dort leitet er eine Schokoladenfabrik, hat eine schöne kleine Wohnung und eine schöne dumme Frau. Die Frau hat einen Vetter und Hermann einen Plan: Weil die Fabrik nicht richtig läuft, aber sein Leben gut versichert ist, will er einen Mann finden, der ihm ums Verrecken ähnlich sieht, will diesen töten, sich ins Ausland absetzen und die Versicherungssumme kassieren. Seine Frau, so viel traut er ihrem „Spatzenhirn“⁶ noch zu, soll der falschen Leiche die richtige Identität geben, das Geld in Empfang nehmen und damit zu ihm in den Süden reisen. Ein einfach genialer, genial einfacher, ein recht banaler Plan. Am schwersten, so möchte man meinen, sei es, das passende Opfer zu finden. Aber hier täuscht sich der Leser. Das Schwierige erweist sich als unerwartet einfach. Fast ohne ihn zu suchen, geradezu im Vorübergehen, findet Hermann am 9. Mai 1930 auf einer Geschäftsreise nach Prag einen Mann, von dem er fest glaubt, dass dieser bei der Polizei ungehindert als seine Leiche durchgehen werde: den Landstreicher Felix. Felix, den Glücklichen, der da am Stadtrand von Prag im Gras liegt und schläft:

„Einen Tusch bitte! Oder besser noch: jenen Trommelwirbel, der ein atemraubendes Akrobatenkunststück begleitet. Unglaublich! [...] Ich starrte auf ein Wunder. Seine Vollkommenheit, ohne jeglichen Grund oder Zweck, erfüllten mich mit sonderbarer Ehrfurcht.“⁷

In Felix glaubt Hermann nicht nur sein Opfer gefunden zu haben, sondern geradezu sich selbst, einen Mann wie ein Zwilling, der ihm gleicht, wie ein Ei dem anderen gleicht, und dem er nur noch die eigenen Kleidungsstücke überzustreifen braucht – und der Doppelgänger ward gefunden. So wird Kontakt geknüpft, über viele Wochen das Vertrauen des Opfers erschlichen, alles vorbereitet und inszeniert, bis Hermann den jungen Mann schließlich sorgfältig säubert, rasiert und erschießt. Dann

⁶ Nabokov 2001, 137. Die deutsche Übersetzung folgt der überarbeiteten englischen Version *Despair* von 1966.

⁷ Nabokov 2001, 13.

macht er sich über die Grenze nach Frankreich davon und wartet auf Lydia, seine Frau, damit diese ihm mit dem Geld der Versicherung folge. Nur einen Haken hat die Sache, den jeder leicht erkennt, nur Hermann nicht: Felix, der Glückliche, sieht Hermann unglücklicherweise überhaupt nicht ähnlich. Die Tat wird rasch enttarnt, die Identität des Opfers festgestellt, und am 1. April 1931 wird Hermann in seinem Versteck von der Polizei geschnappt. Doch Hermann ist nicht bereit, der Realität zu begegnen. Als er vor dem Hotel die wogende Menge sieht, das Auto der Polizei und einen dienstbeflissenen Gendarm, interpretiert er sich die Szene einfach um: Hier ist niemand gekommen, ihn zu verhaften. Hier ist man mitten in einem Film, und er, Hermann, ein Schauspieler, der von seinem Fenster aus der Menge eine Rede zuruft:

„Franzosen! Wir proben jetzt eine Szene. Haltet die Polizisten auf. Ein berühmter Filmschauspieler wird gleich aus diesem Haus gestürzt kommen. Er ist ein Erzverbrecher, aber er muß entinnen. Ihr werdet gebeten, die Polizei am Zupacken zu hindern. Das gehört zur Handlung. [...] *Attention!* Ich möchte eine saubere Flucht sehen. Das wär's. Danke. Ich komme jetzt heraus.“⁸

Hermann hat den Mord am Landstreicher als genialen Wurf seines Gehirns konzipiert und wie auf dem Schachbrett Zug um Zug geplant. Vordergründig geht es um das Geld der Versicherung, hintergründig will er sich seiner unersetzbaren Einmaligkeit und schöpferischen Potenz versichern. Doch auch das Kunstwerk ist gedoppelt. Das eine Kunstwerk ist die Tat als penibel geplantes Meisterstück.⁹ Nur, was nützt der geniale Mord dem Meister, wenn ihn keiner sieht?¹⁰ Die Zeitungen, die Hermann im französischen Versteck verschlingt, um seinem Ruhm nachzulesen, bringen eine Enttäuschung: Erst schreiben sie nichts, dann schreiben sie falsch, diese Scharlatane, Schreiberlinge und Schauerlieferanten, die sich der richtigen Wahrnehmung verweigern und dem perfekten Verbrechen Fehler anhängen wollen:

„Und deshalb, um Anerkennung zu finden, um die Frucht meines Geistes zu rechtfertigen und zu retten, um der Welt die ganze Tiefgründigkeit meines Meisterwerks zu erklären, verfiel ich darauf, die vorliegende Geschichte zu schreiben.“¹¹

⁸ Nabokov 2001, 274.275. So hebt der ‚Regisseur‘ Hermann den drohenden Regieverlust wieder auf. In der russischen Originalfassung fehlt die Rede.

⁹ Nabokov 2001, 263.

¹⁰ Nabokov 2001, 230: Hermann hege keinen Zweifel an der Vollkommenheit seines Werks, das er am 9. März, dem Mordtag, in einem düsteren Wald „vollendet und signiert“ habe. Es solle aber auch von den Menschen gewürdigt werden.

¹¹ Nabokov 2001, 253.

So evoziert das fehlinterpretierte Mordkunstwerk eine zweite Schöpfung, den Roman, den der Leser in Händen hält und als dessen Autor sich der Ich-Erzähler Hermann stolz präsentiert:

„Wenn ich meines schriftstellerischen Vermögens und meiner erstaunlichen Fähigkeit, Vorstellungen mit höchster Anmut und Lebendigkeit auszudrücken, nicht völlig sicher wäre... So etwa wollte ich eigentlich meine Geschichte beginnen.“¹²

Mit diesen Worten beginnen auch für den Leser die Aufzeichnungen, die das Geschehen rekapitulieren und Deutungshoheit beanspruchen und die am Tag der Verhaftung damit enden, dass sich Hermann als Filmschauspieler auf die Flucht begeben will. In einem Zeitraum von kaum zwei Wochen zeichnet er in Vor- und Rückblenden und unterbrochen durch immer neue Einfälle, Sprachspiele, Zahlenakrobatik und allerlei Assoziationen die Geschichte als Kunstkrimi nach und berichtet dabei einerseits aus der Sicht des planenden Superhirns und andererseits mit der zaudernden Stimme des Verzweifelten, der ahnt, dass ihm irgendwo auf dem Wege der entscheidende Fehler unterlaufen sein muss. So ist Hermann beides: der Täter und der Detektiv, der sich an seine eigenen Fersen heftet, um sich auf die Spur zu kommen. Und in seinem Schlepptau läuft der Leser, der die schwierige Aufgabe hat, das Geschehen nachzuvollziehen in dem Wirrwarr der Doppelrollen und Überblendungen und sich dabei nicht blenden zu lassen von dem, der erzählt. Der Leser sieht, was Hermann sieht. Aber er sieht, wenn er genau hinsieht, auch das, was Hermann nicht sehen will.

Der betrogene Betrüger

Hermann sieht sein Ebenbild in einem Mann, der ihm nicht im mindesten gleicht. Was sich der Leser aus den verstreuten Hinweisen über das äußere Erscheinungsbild der beiden Protagonisten alsbald zusammenreimen kann, entdeckt der Mörder erst nach der Tat. Auf der Flucht in den Süden verschließt sich Hermann im Toilettenraum eines Schnellzugs und untersucht den Rucksack seines Opfers. Während er sich dort auf dem WC mit den übriggebliebenen Lebensmitteln des Toten, mit Äpfeln und Wurst, genüsslich den Bauch vollschlägt, studiert er dessen Pass:

¹² Nabokov 2001, 7. Ähnlich wiederholt ebd., 253.

„Seltsamerweise sah sein photographiertes Gesicht dem meinen nicht sehr ähnlich; man konnte es natürlich ohne weiteres für ein Photo von mir halten – und doch, es mutete mich seltsam an, und ich weiß noch, wie ich dachte, hier sei der wahre Grund dafür, daß er sich unserer Ähnlichkeit so wenig bewußt war: Er sah sich selbst im Spiegel, das heißt also von rechts nach links, und nicht, wie in Wirklichkeit, von links nach rechts wie die Sonne. Menschliche Schafsköpfigkeit, Nachlässigkeit und Sinnenträgheit – all dies offenbarte sich in der Tatsache, daß sogar die amtlichen Definitionen in der kurzen Aufstellung persönlicher Merkmale nicht ganz mit den Epitheta in meinem eigenen Paß (den ich zu Hause gelassen hatte) übereinstimmten. Eine Bagatelle, gewiß, aber bezeichnend.“¹³

Bezeichnend ist nun vor allem, dass Hermann es mit den „Bagatellen“, den Kleinigkeiten und Details, nicht übermäßig genau nimmt. Sie passen nicht in sein künstlerisches Konzept. Dieses Konzept, nach dem er sein Mordwerk gestaltet, wird auch in seinem Bericht immer wieder pseudotheoretisiert und besonders in einem Gespräch zum Thema, das er mit Ardalion führt, dem Vetter seiner Frau Lydia, als alle drei einen gemeinsamen Ausflug zum See unternehmen an einem sonnigen Sonntagvormittag, viele Monate vor der Tat. Auch Ardalion ist Künstler. Genauer: Kunstmaler, ein, wie Hermann findet, „miserabler Maler“.¹⁴ Aber im Unterschied zum schriftstellernden Todeskünstler, von dem noch niemand etwas ahnt, weil seine Tat ja noch gar nicht begangen und sein Buch noch nicht geschrieben ist, sieht man Ardalion zumindest ab und an bei der Arbeit. So auch jetzt, als er im Schatten einer Kiefer sitzt und Skizzenblock und Bleistift hervorzieht, um Hermann zu zeichnen:

„Sie haben ein schwieriges Gesicht“, sagte er und blinzelte. [...] „[W]arum sagen Sie, ich hätte ein schwieriges Gesicht? Wo liegt der Haken?“, will Hermann wissen.

„Keine Ahnung. Das Blei bringt Sie einfach nicht. Nächstes Mal muß ich's mit Kohle oder Öl probieren.“ Er radierte etwas aus, schnipste die Gummikrümel mit dem Fingerrücken weg; legte den Kopf schräg. „Komisch, ich dachte immer, ich hätte ein ganz gewöhnliches Gesicht. Versuchen Sie's doch vielleicht mal im Profil.“ Ardalion: „Na, gewöhnlich würde ich nicht gerade sagen. [...] Nein, wenn Sie mich fragen, ich finde, es hat etwas entschieden Merkwürdiges. Alle Ihre Züge rutschen mir sozusagen unterm Bleistift weg, rutschen weg und sind verschwunden.“ „Solche Gesichter kommen also selten vor, meinen Sie das?“ „Jedes Gesicht ist einzigartig“, deklamierte Ardalion. Darauf Hermann: „Nun, also wirklich – einzigartig? ... Geht das nicht zu weit?“ Und zählt zum Beweis eine lange Reihe typisierter Gesichter der Menschheitsgeschichte auf. Darauf entgegnet Ardalion: „Als nächstes sagen Sie noch, alle Chinesen sehen sich gleich. Sie vergessen, mein Guter, daß der

¹³ Nabokov 2001, 224.

¹⁴ Nabokov 2001, 47.

Künstler vor allem den Unterschied zwischen den Dingen wahrnimmt. Auf Ähnlichkeiten achten nur die Banausen.“ Hermann, der bereits den geheimen Kunstmord an seinem Doppelgänger vor Augen hat, entgegnet: „Aber Sie müssen zugeben [...] daß es manchmal auf die Ähnlichkeit ankommt.“ „Wenn man einen zweiten Kerzenhalter kauft, sagte Ardalion.“¹⁵

Es bestehe wirklich keine Notwendigkeit, das Gespräch weiter aufzuzeichnen, befindet an dieser Stelle der gekränkte Erzähler, und auch wir wollen uns wieder ausklinken aus dem fiktionalen Geschehen und zweierlei festhalten: Erstens, dass die beiden Künstler hier grundlegend unterschiedliche Auffassungen vom Leben und der Kunst kundtun. Für den Maler Ardalion zählen die Unterschiede, für den Schreiber Hermann zählt die Wiederholbarkeit, die typisierte Ähnlichkeit und damit verbundene Austauschbarkeit von Menschen.¹⁶ Und dass sich zweitens ihre abstrakten Auffassungen von der Kunst mit einem höchst konkreten Gegenstand verbinden, dem ihnen gemeinsamen Objekt der Begierde, das sich in dieser Szene gerade in der Sonne aalt: Lydia, Hermanns Frau, die sich mit ein paar Zwischenrufen immer wieder in das Gespräch einblendet. Sie wird von Hermann zwar vollkommen ignoriert, doch erwächst eben aus der Ausblendung der sich hier aufzeigenden Dreiecksstruktur die psychologische Motivierung seiner Tat: Der Mord an Felix, dem Landstreicher, ist eine Stellvertretertat an dem eigentlichen Doppelgänger der Geschichte, an Ardalion, dem Cousin, Kunstmaler – und Liebhaber von Hermanns Frau.

Von Anfang an gibt Hermann sich rege Mühe, dem Leser und sich selbst seine Frau als ausgesprochen einfältige Person darzustellen, die, wenig gebildet und wenig aufmerksam, notorisch alles verliere, was man ihr anvertraut:

Statt ihr einen Brief zum Einstecken mitzugeben, hätte man ihn auch gleich in den Fluß werfen und alles übrige dem Scharfsinn der Strömung und der Anglermuße des Empfängers überlassen können.¹⁷

Lydia ist klein, dick und formlos, berichtet Hermann, der sich über die mangelnde Ordnung seiner Frau mokiert und zugleich froh ist, dass sie die vielen Lügen nicht im Kopf behalten kann, die er ihr im Verlauf des zehnjährigen Zusammenlebens aufgetischt habe. Was sie in der Morgenzeitung gelesen hat, sei bei ihr bis zum Abend vergessen:

¹⁵ Nabokov 2001, 56-59.

¹⁶ Das macht ihn auch zu einem Befürworter des Kommunismus, der dem bunten Wirrwarr des flüchtigen Lebens „eine wunderbar ausgerichtete Welt von identischen Kerlen mit breiten Schultern und winzigen Köpfen“ entgegenstellen werde: Nabokov 2001, 31.

¹⁷ Nabokov 2001, 38.39.

Aber sie vergaß tatsächlich alles. Ihr Schirm blieb der Reihe nach bei allen unseren Bekannten stehen; ihr Lippenstift tauchte an so unbegreiflichen Stellen auf wie in der Hemdentasche ihres Vetters; und was sie in der Morgenzeitung gelesen hatte [...] ¹⁸

Doch, stopp, Moment, einen Augenblick: Vetter – Hemdtasche – Lippenstift? Der Leser überliest, was Hermann selbst nicht wissen will: vergessene Lippenstifte, verstreute Wäschestücke, Ardalion in der eigenen Badewanne. Und er überhört, was Hermann nicht hören will: die verzärtelte Sprache zwischen Vetter und Cousine, „Kätzchen“ und „Liebling“, „Ardi“ und „Lyddi“. Ein Novemberabend ist ihm allerdings doch im Gedächtnis geblieben: Hermann kommt von der Arbeit und trifft seine Frau nicht zu Hause an. Ein Zettel liegt auf dem Tisch. Ausgegangen sei sie, ins Kino. Hermann weiß nichts mit sich anzufangen und geht zu Ardalion, weil er, wie es heißt, „irgendeiner Art Verkehr mit der Welt bedurfte“. ¹⁹ Den hatte Ardalion offenbar gerade hinter sich, denn als Hermann zum Atelier kommt, dauert es lange, bis man ihm überhaupt öffnet. Ardalion trägt einen Künstlerkittel über dem bloßen Körper und ist nicht allein:

Auf Ardaliions Bett lag Lydia, halb angezogen – das heißt, ohne Schuhe, nur mit einem zerknitterten grünen Unterrock bekleidet –, und rauchte. ²⁰

Lydia sei krank und habe es mit dem Magen, erklären die beiden, während Lydia ihr Haar in Ordnung bringt, und Hermann schaut lieber nicht so genau hin, sondern betrachtet Ardaliions Aquarelle, und am Ende haben alle ein „Musterbeispiel für einen heiter und nützlich verbrachten Abend“ miteinander verlebt: „Ja, alles war gut, alles war ausgezeichnet, ich fühlte mich wie ein anderer Mensch, erfrischt, erneuert, erlöst“, ²¹ schreibt Hermann, und ein Vierteljahr später und drei Kapitel weiter geht er los und erschießt einen Mann, den glücklichen Landstreicher Felix.

Der Mord als Kunstwerk

Hermanns Mordtat ist ein Akt der Verschiebung und zielt auf die Ehefrau und den Liebhaber in einer Person. Dafür wird ein Opfer gesucht, das der

¹⁸ Nabokov 2001, 38.

¹⁹ Nabokov 2001, 138.

²⁰ Nabokov 2001, 138.

²¹ Nabokov 2001, 141.

Ehefrau ähnlich ist. Lydia und Felix sind in Hermanns Augen schwach, dumm und passiv und als Opfer geradezu ideal. Beide durchschauen nicht seine Lügen, nicht die Frau mit dem „Spatzenhirn“ und nicht der Tippelbruder, der seine Briefe an Hermann mit „Spatz“ unterschreibt.²² Beide haben braune Haare, beide tragen grüne Kleidung, beiden werden von Hermann die Nägel manikürt,²³ und beide bringt der Erzähler in die Vergangenheitsform.²⁴ Zugleich soll ihr Tod ein Kunstwerk sein, das die stümperhafte Malerei des Nebenbuhlers überbietet. Hermann, der sich in Ardalions Porträt überhaupt nicht wiederfinden kann und keinerlei Ähnlichkeit mit sich entdeckt, setzt sich eine Frist, das eigene Kunstwerk zu beginnen: Eben an dem Tag, da Ardalion Hermanns Bildnis fertigstellt, am 9. September 1930, schreibt er Felix einen Brief, dass er Arbeit für ihn gefunden habe und seine Antwort unter dem Kennwort „Ardalion“ postlagernd erwarte.²⁵ Doch scheint Hermann, der sich mit seinem Tatbericht ein literarisches Denkmal zu setzen beabsichtigt, dem eigenen Schreibtalent zunehmend zu misstrauen und in die Malerei ausweichen zu wollen:

„Wie sehne ich mich danach, Sie zu überzeugen! Und ich werde, ich werde Sie überzeugen! Ihr Schurken, ich werde euch alle zum Glauben zwingen... obwohl ich fürchte, daß Wörter, auf Grund ihrer besonderen Natur, allein nicht imstande sind, eine derartige Ähnlichkeit anschaulich zu vermitteln: Die beiden Gesichter müßten Seite an Seite abgebildet werden, in echten Farben, nicht in Worten; dann und nur dann würde der Zuschauer sehen, worum es mir geht.“²⁶

Nicht mit den Mitteln der Literatur, nicht mit literarischen Methoden sei die erstrebte Ähnlichkeit festzuhalten. Was er brauche, sei „die ganz gewöhnliche, grobschlächtige Deutlichkeit der Malerei“ – oder der Tod, der in der absoluten Ruhe erst die Identität der Doppelgänger aufzeigen werde, die das Leben verwischt.²⁷ Dabei ist Hermanns eigene Identität unsicher und wechselt auch in ihrem künstlerischen Selbstverständnis zwischen Schriftsteller, Maler und Schauspieler verschiedentlich hin und her, um sich nach Felix' Ermordung noch einmal in einen Musiker zu verwandeln und am Ende der Erzählung der drohenden Festnahme und der damit verbundenen Festlegung auf das Bild des Mörders durch den

²² Nabokov 2001, 137.158.

²³ Nabokov 2001, 217.

²⁴ Lydia allerdings nur grammatikalisch: Nabokov 2001, 33.36.42.

²⁵ Nabokov 2001, 77.80. Später tötet er Felix auf Ardalions Grundstück. Hermann und Ardalion wiederum sind über die Doppelbedeutung von *pisar'*, schreiben und malen, verbunden.

²⁶ Nabokov 2001, 25.

²⁷ Nabokov 2001, 23.24.

„Sprung aus der Narration in die Kinomatographie“ zu entgehen.²⁸ So sucht der betrogene Versicherungsbetrüger dem Nebenbuhler zumindest den Platz des wahren Künstlers streitig zu machen, wenn er ihm schon seine Ehefrau überlassen muss. Doch der einmal eingeschlagene Weg der Loslösung von sich selbst führt nicht zur Wahrheit, sondern in den Wahnsinn:

„Ich habe mich viel zu sehr daran gewöhnt, mich selbst von außen zu betrachten, gleichzeitig Maler und Modell zu sein [...]. Wie ich es auch anstelle, es gelingt mir nicht, in meine ursprüngliche Hülle zurückzuschlüpfen, geschweige denn mich in meinem alten Selbst heimisch zu fühlen; die Unordnung dort ist viel zu groß; Dinge sind verrückt worden, die Lampe ist schwarz und tot, meine Vergangenheit liegt in Fetzen verstreut auf dem Boden.“²⁹

Je mehr Hermann seine eigene Aufspaltung vorantreibt, desto zerfaserter wird die Realität, gleitet ihm die Wirklichkeit unter den Händen davon, wie Ardalion Hermanns Gesichtszüge beim Porträtmalen unter dem Bleistift wegrutschen. Hermann konstruiert sich seine eigene Sicht auf die Welt und unterläuft auf diese Weise das, was er als Kunstauffassung propagierte: dass Kunst der Widerspiegelung einer allgemeinen Realität zu dienen habe und es darum vor allem auf Gleichförmigkeit ankomme. Damit scheitert er nicht nur als Ehemann, dessen Spaltung im eigenen Bett begann und dessen großartige Phantasien sich als sexuelle Impotenz erwiesen.³⁰ Er scheitert auch als fabulierender Mörder, der erst beim zweiten Lesen seines Manuskripts den entscheidenden Fehler entdeckt: den im Wagen vergessenen Schock-Stock-Wanderstock, auf dem der Name und die Herkunft des Opfers verzeichnet sind. So stolpert der gehörnte Ehemann über ein Phallussymbol, wird der Mörder durch ein übersehenes Detail zu Fall gebracht und Hermanns Impotenz auch auf künstlerischem Gebiet aufgedeckt.³¹ Das so sorgsam geplante Verbrechen fliegt auf, die erwartete Bewunderung des Publikums bleibt aus. Sie weicht der Häme und dem Entsetzen. Hermanns Eintragungen

²⁸ Grübel 2000, 72. Nabokov 2001, 224.225: Hermann übernimmt die in Felix' Pass angegebene Berufsbezeichnung und gibt sich in Frankreich als Musiker aus.

²⁹ Nabokov 2001, 29.

³⁰ Die erste Dissoziationsszene endet mit der gähnenden Lydia, die nach einem Buch verlangt, das den impotenten Ehemann im Bett ersetzen soll, während dieser sich mit ihr im sexuellen Höhenflug befindlich glaubt: Nabokov 2001, 42. Der Kontrast zum Liebhaber wird durch dessen sprechenden Namen noch unterstrichen. Ardalion alludiert auf *lion* („Löwe“) und *ardor* („Verlangen“; vgl. *Ada or Ardor*): Nabokov 2001, 140.

³¹ Die erste Szene wird aufgegriffen in dem französischen Hotelzimmer, in dem Hermann im Nachthemd dem Genuss entgegenfiebert, mit seinem Buch, dem Manuskript, „ins Bett zu gehen“. Mehrere Anläufe scheitern und stoßen ihn schließlich auf die Leerstelle des Titels: Nabokov 2001, 259-261.

degenerieren zum Tagebuch, der niedrigsten Form von Literatur,³² und gleichen sich den *Aufzeichnungen eines Wahnsinnigen* (1835) an. Der Schlusseintrag fällt auf den 1. April.³³ Mit ihm scheint der Autor Hermann Karlowitsch noch einmal zum großen Sprung auf eine neue Kunstebene anzusetzen und sich den Stimmen der Kritik durch das Medium des Films zu entziehen. Doch „alles ist Täuschung, ein billiger Zaubertrick“³⁴ – über Hermanns Werk steht am Ende die Verzweiflung.

Kollegenschelte

Mit dem Rollenwechsel vom Kriminalbuchschreiber zum Filmschauspieler scheint Hermann ein letzter Coup geglückt. Der Leser erfährt nicht mehr, ob es dem Betrüger wirklich gelingt, sich dem Zugriff der Polizei zu entwinden. Ob es ihm gelingt, als stiller Mann mit Bart in ein verschwiegene Plätzchen der Welt abzutauchen, wie er es in seinem Mordkapitel für sich vorsieht,³⁵ oder ob er, dem „ehrgeizigen Hintergrund voller Anspielungen“ gemäß, vor dem Ardalion Hermanns Porträt aufspannt, eben an dem Galgen landet, der ihm hier zugewiesen wird.³⁶ Das offene Ende lässt aber zumindest auf ein langes Leben in der Literaturgeschichte hoffen. Denn je verrätelter der Schluss, desto wahrscheinlicher wird die Re-Lektüre des Rezipienten. Nicht nur Hermann ist beim zweiten Lesen auf der Suche nach dem übersehenen Detail.³⁷ Auch der Leser liest das Manuskript vom Ende her neu und wird zu neuen Theoriebildungen verleitet. Doch die Hoffnung auf eine befreiende Lösung ist trügerisch. Traut man dem Titel, den Hermann seinem Buch gibt, so ist das Gegenteil festgeschrieben:

Ja, ich begann, alles zu bezweifeln, zweifelte an Grundvoraussetzungen und wußte jetzt, daß jenes bißchen Leben, das noch vor mir lag, ganz und gar einem

³² Nabokov 2001, 269.

³³ Das Datum ist symbolisch und verweist auf Gogol', der am 1. April neuen Stils Geburtstag hatte. Seine *Zapiski sumašedšego* protokollieren ebenfalls in Tagebuchform mit immer phantastischeren Datumsangaben den Verfall eines Verstandes. Innerfiktional verweist das Datum auf Nabokov 2001, 36, wo Hermann den Leser in den April schicken will.

³⁴ Nabokov 2001, 136. Und ebd., 230: Jedes Kunstwerk sei eine Täuschung.

³⁵ Nabokov 2001, 202.

³⁶ Nabokov 2001, 77. Aufschluss gibt auch Nabokov nicht. Im Vorwort zur englischen Ausgabe schreibt er: „Wir verlassen Hermann dort auf dem lächerlichen Höhepunkt seiner Verwirrung. Ich erinnere mich nicht, was schließlich aus ihm wurde. Immerhin liegen zwischen damals und heute fünfzehn weitere Bücher und doppelt so viele Jahre. Ich kann mich nicht einmal entsinnen, ob er den Film, den er inszenieren wollte, jemals gemacht hat.“ Vgl. Nabokov 2001, 281.

³⁷ Nabokov 2001, 257: „Doch ein zweites Lesen machte mich stutzig.“

aussichtslosen Kampf gegen diesen Zweifel geweiht sein würde; und ich lächelte das Lächeln des Verdammten und schrieb mit einem stumpfen, vor Schmerz aufschreienden Bleistift rasch und unerschrocken auf die erste Seite meines Werks: *Verzweiflung*; nicht nötig, nach einem besseren Titel zu suchen!³⁸

Hermanns Verzweiflung ist ausgelöst durch die Einsicht in die Unvollkommenheit seines Verbrechens. Der übersehene Wanderstock hat das Meisterwerk des so sorgfältig geplanten Mordes in „Dreck“ verwandelt und im Kern zerstört.³⁹ Doch mit dem unvollkommenen Mord ist auch der Status des Künstlers in Frage gestellt, hatte Hermann doch das Verbrechen als Kunstwerk inszeniert und den Sünder wider die Gesetze, „die so viel Aufhebens machen um ein bißchen vergossenes Blut“, von der ersten Seite an mit einem Dichter verglichen,⁴⁰ der allein seinem Werk verpflichtet sei. Diesen Status als Künstler gibt Hermann nicht so leicht auf. Schließlich sieht er sich selbst als Literaturkenner *par excellence*,⁴¹ und tatsächlich ist sein Bericht von einem feinen Netz intertextueller Bezüge durchzogen. Doch der im Allgemeinen auf Ähnlichkeit und Typisierung Bedachte ist in diesem Zusammenhang unvermutet auf Abgrenzung aus. Vorbilder sucht er keine und übergießt Kollegen, die seine Vorliebe für kriminalistische Sujets teilen, mit so boshafter Kritik, dass man sie sogleich in Drews' beschimpfte Dichtersammlung aufnehmen könnte:

Aber was sind sie schon – Doyle, Dostojewskij, Leblanc, Wallace –, was sind all die großen Romanschriftsteller, die über flinke Verbrecher schrieben, was sind all die großen Verbrecher, die nie eine Zeile der flinken Verfasser gelesen haben – was sind sie schon im Vergleich mit mir? Stümper und Narren!⁴²

Besonders ins Visier gerät ihm Dostoevskij, dieser berühmte „Verfasser russischer Thriller“, den Hermann als „nationalen Experten für Seelenqual und die Verirrungen der menschlichen Selbstachtung“ einführt und bei dem es nach „Daumenschraubengesprächen“ klingt, nach falscher Demut und mystischem Aufputz.⁴³ Zugleich kopiert er von ihm nicht nur das Doppelgänger-Motiv, sondern auch die illusionäre Vorstellung vom perfekten Verbrechen, wie dieser es in „*Crimen et circenses*. Verzeihung:

³⁸ Nabokov 2001, 264. Hermann hatte bereits etliche Titel durchgespielt: ebd., 261. Grübel 2000, 94 übersetzt *otčajanje* mit „Hoffnungslosigkeit“.

³⁹ Nabokov 2001, 263.

⁴⁰ Nabokov 2001, 160.7.

⁴¹ Nabokov 2001, 63: „Und da wir gerade von Literatur reden: Es gibt nichts, was ich darüber nicht weiß. Sie war immer ein rechtes Steckenpferd von mir.“

⁴² Nabokov 2001, 160.

⁴³ Nabokov 2001, 118.

Crime et châiment (französische Ausgabe)“ geschildert hat.⁴⁴ Doch während der „alte Dosto“ die Tat nicht abtrennt vom Gewissen des Mörders und die Frage nach der Sühne hochhält, weist Hermann solch moralische Anliegen grundsätzlich zurück:

Irgendwelche Gewissensbisse meinerseits sind absolut ausgeschlossen: Ein Künstler empfindet keine Gewissensbisse, selbst wenn sein Werk nicht verstanden, nicht anerkannt wird.⁴⁵

Die ethisch-metaphysische Provokation des Vorgängers ist bei ihm durch eine technokratisch-ästhetische ersetzt.⁴⁶ Zwar wird er, wie er selbst eingesteht, auf seiner Flucht dem verachteten „Raskallnikoff“ auf groteske Weise immer ähnlicher,⁴⁷ doch treiben ihn dabei weder Reue noch Schuldgefühl, sondern allein die verzweifelte Angst vor narzisstischer Kränkung durch Aufdeckung der eigenen Stümperhaftigkeit. Ihr sucht er letztlich zu entkommen, wenn er sich als Filmschauspieler auf die Flucht begeben will. Was von ihm bleiben soll, ist sein schriftstellerisches Werk, das er einem „Auserwählten“ anvertrauen möchte. Dieser, ein russischer Schriftsteller in der Emigration, dessen Bücher nicht in der UdSSR erscheinen dürfen, soll sein erster Leser werden und die Veröffentlichung besorgen:

Da... ich habe Sie erwähnt, Sie, meinen ersten Leser, Sie, den weithin bekannten Verfasser psychologischer Romane. Ich habe Sie gelesen und fand Sie sehr verkünstelt, obwohl nicht schlecht gebaut. Was werden Sie empfinden, als lesender Schriftsteller, wenn Sie meine Geschichte in Angriff nehmen? Freude? Neid? Oder gar... wer weiß?... Sie nutzen vielleicht meine bedingungslose Beseitigung dazu, mein Zeug als Ihr eigenes auszugeben... als Frucht Ihrer eigenen listigen... ja, das gebe ich Ihnen zu... Ihrer eigenen listigen und erfahrenen Einbildungskraft; und lassen mich draußen in der Kälte stehen.⁴⁸

Man ist versucht, in dem „scharfsinnigen Romancier“,⁴⁹ von dem Hermann ersetzt zu werden fürchtet, Nabokov selbst zu wittern.⁵⁰ Damit wäre das Motiv der Usurpation auch auf die Ebene des historischen

⁴⁴ Nabokov 2001, 229.

⁴⁵ Nabokov 2001, 229. Wörtlich: Der Künstler kenne keine Reue (*raskajanie*). Ähnlich hatte Anfang 2006 Woody Allens Kinofilm *Match Point* das Sujet von *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* neu erzählt. Der hier begangene Doppelmord wird einem Junkie angehängt; der eigentliche Mörder kommt ohne Gewissensqual davon.

⁴⁶ Grübel 2000, 81.

⁴⁷ Nabokov 2001, 245.

⁴⁸ Nabokov 2001, 108.

⁴⁹ Nabokov 2001, 202.

⁵⁰ Nabokov 2001, 276: Im Vorwort zur englischen Ausgabe greift Nabokov selbst Hermanns Anliegen auf: „Wie es mit all meinen Büchern geschah, ist auch *Ottschajanije* (trotz Hermanns Mutmaßung) im Prototyp des Polizeistaates verboten.“

Autors ausgedehnt: Nabokov wird zum Verfasser der *Verzweiflung* und Hermann zum Sprachrohr Nabokovscher Dostoevskij-Aversion. Doch ob Nabokov seinen stümperhaften Helden als Literat ersetzen will, scheint mehr als fraglich. Wie auch seine Vorbehalte gegen Dostoevskij einem spezifischen Verständnis von Literatur entspringen, so sieht sich Nabokov aus ästhetischen Gründen von Hermann getrennt. Nabokov stellt das Künstlerische konsequent in den Mittelpunkt. Ihn interessiert das *Wie*, nicht das *Was* eines Werkes, und das ästhetische Vergnügen, das ein Kunstwerk dem Rezipienten bereitet, ist das einzige *Wozu*, das er gelten lassen kann. Vehement lehnt er es ab, einem Werk moralische Maximen, Ratschläge und Lebensweisheiten entreißen zu wollen:

Man darf Literatur, wahre Literatur, nicht wie einen Heiltrank hinunterstürzen [...]. Literatur muß man zerlegen, zerstückeln, zerquetschen, um ihren lieblichen Duft in der hohlen Hand wahrnehmen zu können.⁵¹

Hermann dagegen beginnt zu schreiben, um über den „Heiltrank“ Literatur erlittene Kränkungen zu kompensieren⁵² und gesellschaftliche „Botschaften“ zu transportieren.⁵³ Seine Motive entspringen keinem genialen Schöpferhirn. Sie entspringen seiner Eigenliebe, seiner gekränkten Eitelkeit und verbinden die Tat mit zu viel nützlichen Aspekten: Rache am Liebhaber, Rückgewinnung der Frau und ein Leben im Luxus durch das erräuberte Geld. Zuviel Utilitarismus für den reinen Wortkünstler Nabokov, dem Kunstfertigkeit über alles ging.⁵⁴ Auf der ästhetischen Ebene, nicht auf der moralischen, liegen daher wohl die Gründe, die Nabokov dazu veranlassen, sich von dem mörderischen Helden zu trennen und ihn seiner Verwirrung zu überlassen. Den Künstler Nabokov hat dabei der Mord als moralische Untat nicht interessiert – Nabokov hat das *Kunstwerk* nicht überzeugt.⁵⁵ Als Mord-Künstler war Hermann zu sehr Dilettant, ein schlechter Handwerker ohne Sorgfalt und Sinn fürs Detail, der den Wanderstock bei der Leiche vergisst und es

⁵¹ Nabokov 1991, 158.159.

⁵² Nabokov 2001, 253: „Ja, es war ein drastisches Heilmittel, eine unmenschliche, mittelalterliche Purgierung; aber sie erwies sich als wirksam.“

⁵³ Nabokov 2001, 205. Wegen des gesellschaftlichen Nutzens will Hermann sein Buch in der UdSSR publizieren, in der eine neue Welt austauschbarer Doppelgänger entstanden sei. Dagegen Nabokov selbst: „Verzweiflung will, im Einklang mit meinen übrigen Büchern, keinen gesellschaftlichen Kommentar geben und trägt keine Botschaft zwischen den Zähnen.“ Nabokov 2001, 278.

⁵⁴ Grübel 2000, 73.76.80: Hermann sei geleitet durch das Motiv der Gewinnsucht und des Nutzens (*koryst'*) und damit vom Gegenbegriff zu Kants Zweckfreiheit der Kunst. Er verwische zudem den für Nabokov unaufgebbaren Unterschied zwischen Fiktion und Leben und propagiere den Tod des Autors, indem er sein eigenes Buch nicht durch sich selbst, sondern von seinem Gedächtnis geschrieben sieht.

⁵⁵ Anders Grübel 2000, 95: Nabokov stelle in Hermann die Verantwortungslosigkeit dessen bloß, der seine Handlungen allein an ästhetischen Kriterien bemisst.

versäumt, seinen eigenen Pass beim Opfer zu drapieren. Hermann verübt die Tat unkonzentriert und nur auf sich bezogen. Damit lenkt er schließlich selbst die Polizei auf seine Spur. Die anstehende Verhaftung des Helden am Schluss des Romans und die damit im Hintergrund drohende Hinrichtung ist darum keine Strafe im Sinne von Dostoevskijs *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. Es ist die angemessene Konsequenz für jemanden, der die Grundregeln ästhetischen Arbeitens missachtet: wachsame Wahrnehmung, Würdigung des Details und technisch sorgfältige Ausführung. Die Verzweiflung, die Hermann am Ende des Romans erfasst und die er zum Titel seines Werkes macht, ist nicht nur die Verzweiflung über sein mangelndes Genie; es ist auch die Verzweiflung des Genies Nabokov über die Zumutungen eines Dilettanten.

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BOOK REVIEWS ◇ REZENSIONEN

Леонид Цыпкин, *Лето в Бадене: роман*. Вступительная статья Сюзан Зонтаг. Послесловие Андреа Устинова. Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение, 2003. 224 с.

In his novel, Tsyppkin seems to develop Dostoevsky's artistic maxim of finding a true human being within any representative of human species (найти человека в человеке). As a novelist, however, Tsyppkin is searching for such an inner, true human being in Dostoevsky himself, trying to find what is human about Dostoevsky—the human being (ищет человека в Достоевском). This is what prompts Tsyppkin to turn Dostoevsky into a Dostoevskian character. The enterprise is risky for Tsyppkin—the author but very instructive for Dostoevsky scholars—we can learn about layers upon layers of reader response in Russian Modernism, and even Post-Modernism. Tsyppkin modernizes Dostoevsky, with all the obvious risks, the less obvious benefits, and the unsavory implications of applying our, modern minds to a writer gazing into eternity. Despite these implications, Tsyppkin's vision deserves our appreciation and careful examination.

Susan Sontag's preface to this novel, as well as Andrej Ustinov's afterword, contextualize the book in Tsyppkin's biography and Russian/Soviet History. I would like to contextualize Tsyppkin's novel in Russian literary History as it emerged after Dostoevsky, owing him what it did.

Tsyppkin addresses two specific problems that Dostoevsky's scholars avoid or approach with extreme caution—the writer's Anti-Semitism and a Freudian view of the motif of sexuality in his works. Both present a stumbling block for any serious scholar of Dostoevsky. We all know that these stumbling blocks—Dostoevsky's Anti-Semitism and at least some vague sexual sore spot that bothered him—are there for a fact, yet most of us think that discussing them is either unprofessional or unchaste. We have our reasons. Scandals in or about writers' biographies have very often distracted their readers and scholars from the actual poetic technique and philosophical message of these writers' works. Some of us have been annoyed with these biographical projections to the point of subscribing to Roland Barthes' view—a good author (to analyze well) is a dead author—Barthesianism being an act of despair and hermeneutic aporia on our part, to be sure, but still quite understandable, considering the amount of literary gossip that passes even today for literary scholarship.

With Dostoevsky especially one has to be careful. After Bakhtin some of us know better than to project scandals, pedophilia, outrageous statements by a character or a narrator, or internal contradictions in an argument *in* Dostoevsky's novels, *on* Dostoevsky's own character or biography. Since Freud's "Dostoevsky and Parricide", we have come a long way. We do not easily accept the notion that all problematic motifs in Dostoevsky's works are based on the author's own childhood or youth traumas—or at least we have learnt to doubt that these traumas were primarily sexual in nature. Dostoevsky's biography is indeed as tempestuous as his novels but if and when we concentrate on his biography, it may actually obscure his poetics and even philosophy. The main reason we try to detach ourselves from Dostoevsky-the-man is practical: looking at his personality instead of his texts may prove hermeneutically counter-productive.

Admittedly, this way of coping with Dostoevsky-the-man while dealing with Dostoevsky-the-writer is not easy; it requires serious self-discipline, an exercise in what Dostoevsky's follower Berdiaev once called anthropodicy. Dostoevsky, like most of us, does not live up to his own moral ideal. A writer who claims that not a single human tear can be justified as a means to attain universal harmony is hardly an image agreeing with that of an Anti-Semitic, Anti-Polish, Anti-French, Anti-German, and generally xenophobic mortal man. On the other hand, a writer whose leading motifs include the image of a tyrant man abusing a woman who depends on him, in his own private life, might have been just such a tyrant with the women he had ever loved, especially with his meek, young second wife.

Is abstinence from biographical projection, therefore, a particular virtue required of a literary scholar? In some cases, such as Dostoevsky's, this virtue seems to be not only desirable but imperative. But Tsyppkin's book is not the work of a scholar. He is treating Dostoevsky as Dostoevsky himself has treated all of us, mortals—with a novelistic commentary. The most important feature of Tsyppkin's book—a feature that may cause rapture and indignation in equal measure—is that Tsyppkin turns Dostoevsky into a Dostoevskian character. This metamorphosis allows Tsyppkin to correlate Dostoevsky-the-man with Dostoevsky-the-writer without any overt projection that a literary scholar nowadays shuns. A novelist can afford not shunning these, instead turning the unmentionables of Dostoevsky-the-man into literary motifs and plot-elements. What is unconveyable or unseemly for scholarly discourse or consideration, as for any expository writing, becomes

expressible in poetry and poetics. Dostoevsky knew that, and so did Tsypkin. As a novelist, Tsypkin directly addresses such taboo topics as Dostoevsky's fascination with the motif of pedophilia, his anti-Semitism, his own tyrannical treatment of his wife, and the medical, psychological underpinning to his character, including his literary temperament. I personally do not like this novelistic approach—it reminds me of the treatment to which Ham subjected his drunken father Noah.

Interestingly, Dostoevsky himself *seems* to adopt the same approach but he actually observes taboos which are key to what ails his characters. But even with the suspension of taboos so important to Dostoevsky, my personal objections notwithstanding, these things had been done Tsypkin's way in first-rate novels before Tsypkin. One of the most important precedents for that aspect of Tsypkin is Andrej Belyj—whose infinite syntactic periods with internal anachronisms and shifts of spatial and narrative perspectives Tsypkin clearly models or imitates in his novel. The style and aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities of Russian Symbolists constitute a very important prism through which Dostoevsky has reached us and our contemporaries. Both Russian literary history as well as Tsypkin's rendition focus this, Symbolist lens on Dostoevsky. Apart from the infinite syntactic periods containing the leaps of historical flashbacks of a hundred years, Tsypkin, like the Symbolists, likes to retell Dostoevsky's idiosyncratic perception through the writer's stream of consciousness where events as motifs may take forever. Thus when describing "the Yid" Liamshin's blaspheming the icon in *Demons* Tsypkin uses the epic imperfective for letting a mouse into the icon's case (Лямшин подпускал мышь), although the blasphemous action occurs only once. This resembles the narration in Belyj's *Petersburg*, where action is often suspended in eternity. Besides Belyj, and Russian epic and folklore genres, this mode of obliterating historicity in temporal sequences often occurs in Aleksandr Blok's poetry. Thus, in Blok's poem "In a Restaurant," in a temporal sequence of perfectives, the last action seems to take forever, reaching even up to our time. The Gypsy woman kept singing in a yelling tone; her coin-necklace kept jingling, while she kept dancing: "А монисто брэнчало, цыганка плясала // И визжала заре о любви."

Incidentally, the modes of memory operation and surmises and reconstructions in Tsypkin seem to fulfill the beginning of that poem by Blok as if it were the methodological creed for Tsypkin: "I will never

forget—did it happen or not?—that long gone evening...” (Никогда не забуду—он был или не был?—этот вечер...) In Tsyppkin's reconstruction of the Dostoevskys' 1867 Summer in Baden, the most memorable events seem to be chiseled in eternity but not necessarily in reality. Thus, adopting this Symbolist mode of narration, Tsyppkin gets away with actions no literary or historical scholar may afford—such as hazarding guesses about the deep, symbolic truth concerning his hero, Dostoevsky-the-man, at the expense of any factual veracity or objective, reliable data. Tsyppkin's imagination very often intuitively senses some deep and deeply hidden truth about Dostoevsky's inner pain, and that of his wife, but the only factual basis for that imagination is Anna Grigorievna's 1867 Diary—a document hardly reliable when it comes to objective facts but highly effective and impressive in its ability to adequately convey her pain and the pain of her husband and marriage. What she says may not be true or verifiable—especially in Tsyppkin's “non-committed” *erlebte Rede* rendition!—but the way she says it conveys a deeper truth, the truth of the language of pain. Needless to say, Tsyppkin's greatest predecessor in this attitude to truth in fiction is Dostoevsky himself.

The imperfectives that suspend time and switch the temporal perspective into something meta-temporal are but one form of anachronisms used conceptually, in Symbolist poetry and in Tsyppkin's novel. (I have noticed only one instance of such a use for imperfectives in Dostoevsky's own work.) Another type of using anachronisms to conceptualize “reality in the higher sense of the word” (to paraphrase Dostoevsky himself) can be exemplified by the following episode. The narrator is describing Solzhenitsyn's forced emigration, when Solzhenitsyn is about to visit the embankment where “Dostoevsky has been strolling with Anna Grigorievna just now” (только что: 61, 63). Never mind a century or so that had elapsed between Dostoevsky's trip and Solzhenitsyn's forced exile!

Of course, Tsyppkin also uses typically Dostoevskian, polyphonic ways of switching narrative perspective through *erlebte Rede* (for example, where at the beginning of the sentence the pronoun “he” implies Anna's point of view and at its end, Dostoevsky's own reminiscences about his memories of Suslova—54-55, compare to 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, and *passim*). This type of modeling a novel about Dostoevsky-the-man by using the techniques of Dostoevsky-the-writer makes the book very enlightening for a Dostoevsky scholar. After all, despite all of his unhealthy interest in Dostoevsky's all-too-private a life, we cannot deny Tsyppkin his ability to convey

Dostoevsky's poetic world as something very contemporary—the world of a hero contemplating Dostoevsky today—whatever that means for Tsyppkin *or* for us. This aura of something very contemporary about Dostoevsky's pain, image, predicament, and shortcomings is truly admirable in Tsyppkin's novel. From that point of view, *A Summer in Baden* is definitely important for a Dostoevsky scholar to read and consider seriously—as are the writings of Dostoevsky's many tormented and reluctant admirers, from Rozanov and the Symbolists through Nabokov—whom Tsyppkin carelessly compares to Dostoevsky on the grounds that both writers allegedly projected their own pedophilic inclinations upon their characters, like Svidrigailov or Stavrogin in Dostoevsky and Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* (64). Such Neo-Freudian platitudes notwithstanding, Tsyppkin's book confirms the notion that Dostoevsky-the-writer is relevant even today, for those people whom Dostoevsky-the-man despised or would despise, be that a Pole, a German, a persecuted Soviet Jew like Tsyppkin, a woman like Ania Dostoevskaia suffering from a tyrannical husband like Dostoevsky, or you and me.

Yes, the woman suffering from her tyrannical husband indeed plagues Tsyppkin's imagination. Who would not be haunted by it after reading Anna Grigorievna's 1867 Diary? This Diary, which Tsyppkin's hero and alter ego cannot help reading and Tsyppkin himself cannot help citing, is indeed a stumbling block for today's scholars of this great writer, the champion of the humiliated and the offended, especially of women suffering from male tyranny. Yet this same Diary is also a stumbling block *as a motif* in Tsyppkin's novel: as the contemporary character, the narrator (Tsyppkin himself) cannot stop reading this heart-breaking document as he himself travels from Moscow to Leningrad, to find himself in Dostoevsky's Petersburg—and in his Jewish relatives' post-Siege Leningrad. Anna Dostoevskaia's Diary, as Tsyppkin retells its passages in the *erlebte Rede* mode full of scandalousness but also of compassion, is the underlying structure that informs Tsyppkin's novel as a whole. This structural principle is very risky but also very brave. Dostoevsky-the-writer survives the horrible limitations of Dostoevsky-the-man. Like Dostoevsky, Tsyppkin sets himself the task of finding what is human in even the most fallen human being—in this case, presented to us in the person of Dostoevsky himself. Like Dostoevsky and following in his footsteps, Tsyppkin succeeds in finding that human man—находит человека в человеке.

Fjodor Dostojewskij: *Ein grüner Junge*. Aus dem Russischen von Swetlana Geier. Zürich: Ammann Verlag 2006. 832 Seiten.

Große Leistungen setzen Kleinarbeit voraus. Swetlana Geier (geb. 1923) hat ausgeführt, was sie sich vorgenommen hatte: die fünf großen Romane Dostojewskijs in neuer Übersetzung vorzulegen. Alle fünf sind nun da: im Ammann Verlag, Zürich, Leinen mit Schutzumschlag und Schubert. Wer will, kann auch eine Lederausgabe haben. 1994 erschien *Verbrechen und Strafe*, 1996 *Der Idiot*, 1998 *Böse Geister*, 2003 *Die Brüder Karamasow*, 2006 *Ein grüner Junge*. Die Übersetzerin hat, wie man sieht, *Die Brüder Karamasow* als das unbestrittene Hauptwerk vorgezogen, ehe sie sich an Dostojewskijs zweitletzten Roman heranmachte, der, wie es heißt, weniger gelesen wurde als die anderen vier. Weniger? Fragt sich bloß, von wem.

Nun also, 2006, *Ein grüner Junge* für russisch *Podrostok*, vorher bekannt als *Junger Nachwuchs*, *Werdejahre*, *Ein Werdender* und *Der Jüngling*. Wird sich *Ein grüner Junge* gegenüber seinen Titeltkameraden behaupten können? Man denkt an Karl May, der uns vom „Greenhorn“ erzählt. Winnetou lebt. Aber wir sind schließlich in Petersburg. Auch der *Grüne Heinrich* scheint an die Tür zu klopfen. Solche Assoziationen sind wie Mückenschwärme. Man möchte sie wegscheuchen. Vielleicht hat der Verleger daran gedacht, dass sich manch ein Käufer den *Grünen Jungen* zulegt, ohne zu ahnen, dass er ja den *Jüngling* längst in seinem Bücherregal hat. Dostojewskij selbst hätte gewiss nichts dagegen, in zwei Übersetzungen anwesend zu sein, bei wem auch immer.

Doch Scherz beiseite. So dumm sind Dostojewskij-Leser wohl doch nicht. Swetlana Geier pocht darauf – und dies gleich zu Anfang ihrer Anmerkungen (S. 807): „Das russische Wort »podrostok« hat im Deutschen keine adäquate Entsprechung.“ Wirklich nicht? Wahrigs *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1997) verzeichnet unter dem Eintrag „Halbwüchsiger“: *Mensch, der nicht mehr Kind u. noch nicht Erwachsener ist, Jugendlischer*. Warum also nicht *Der Halbwüchsige*? Mag als Romantitel nicht richtig in der Hand liegen. So bleibt als einziger Titelkonkurrent *Der Jüngling* übrig. Arkadij Dolgorukij ist ja schließlich neunzehn Jahre alt während all der Geschehnisse, die er uns nun auf über achthundert Seiten erzählt. Und er tut das nur ein gutes halbes Jahr später, als Zwanzigjähriger. Wie aber definiert Wahrig einen „Jüngling“? Folgendermaßen: *Jugendlischer zwischen Pubertät und Reife; junger Mann*. Was ist dagegen einzuwenden? Warum also nicht

Der Jüngling? Swetlana Geier kann sich allerdings auf Sergej Ožegovs einsprachiges russisches Wörterbuch berufen, das zu *podrostok* vermerkt: *Mal'čik ili devočka v perechodnom vozraste ot detstva k junostvu (preimuštv. ot 12 do 16 let)* (Slova' russkogo jazyka, Moskau 1960, S. 532). Wenn Arkadij nur nicht neunzehn Jahre alt wäre und *Ein Grüner Junge* nicht einen abwertenden Klang hätte, so als würde ein Oberlehrer aus der *Feuerzangenbowle* sagen: „Setzen Sie sich, Sie grüner Junge, Sie!“ Es nützt aber alles nichts. Swetlana Geier hat ja längst ihr Machtwort gesprochen: *Ein grüner Junge*. Und die großen Zeitungen „Welt“ und „Neue Zürcher“ haben das jeweils ohne und mit Kommentar zur Kenntnis genommen.

Martin Ebel geht zwar in der „Welt“ vom 13. Januar 2007 bei seinem Portrait Swetlana Geiers anlässlich des *Grünen Jungen* vor der „großen Kraft“ dieser „kleinen Person“, die er *Die Prophetin* nennt, in die Knie, schießt aber dann Giftpfeile auf den Roman ab, der „selbst in der Fachliteratur nicht ganz ernst genommen“ werde. Ja, der Rezensent meint sogar: „Der Roman krankt daran (könnte man sagen), dass mehrere Handlungsstränge von Anfang an in ihrem ganzen Miteinanderverschlungensein präsentiert werden...“ Ich verzichte darauf, den Satz zu Ende zu zitieren. Sollte man in solchem Deutsch unbedingt den Meister aus Russland kritisieren? Der Leser erfährt mit keinem Wort davon, dass Hermann Hesse den *Jüngling* sehr schätzte und in Dostojewskijs Darstellung der „erfahrungslosen Altklugheit dieses Jünglings“ mittels der „erregten Erlebnisse des Lebens“ ein „unglaublich kühnes, ja freches Kunststück“ sieht. Unerwähnt bleibt auch, dass Franz Kafka seinem Freund Max Brod gerade aus diesem Roman mit „lauter Stimme, außer sich vor Begeisterung“ vorgelesen hat. Und André Gide hat in den Anhang seines Dostojewskij-Buches ausgerechnet eine lange Passage aus dem *Jüngling* als Musterbeispiel für die psychologische Kunst des Autors aufgenommen. Und die in der „Welt“ beschworene „Fachliteratur“? Nimmt sie wirklich diesen Roman „nicht ganz ernst“? Wo zum Teufel hat sich dieser Rezensent denn informiert, wenn er nicht einmal von Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka und André Gide etwas weiß! Zudem liegt seit 1965 meine Monographie *Versuch über Dostoevskijs „Jüngling“* vor, mit der unter anderem deutlich wurde, dass dieser Roman literarhistorisch auf den spanischen Schelmenroman zurück- und auf den Adoleszenzroman des 20. Jahrhunderts vorausweist, im poetologischen Universum also zwischen *Lazarillo de Tormes* und Salingers

The Catcher in the Rye seinen Ort hat und gar nicht so sehr im Ensemble der anderen vier großen Romane Dostojewskijs.¹

Von anderem Kaliber als die Rezension in der „Welt“ ist Felix Philipp Ingolds Würdigung des *Grünen Jungen* in der „Neuen Zürcher Zeitung“ vom 17./18. Februar 2007 unter der geradezu hymnischen Überschrift *Glanzvolle Premiere*, untertitelt: *Nur vermeintlich sein schwächstes Werk*. Unverhofft Ingolds Argument, allein schon Dostojewskijs Entwürfe und Varianten zu diesem Roman, die ja umfangreich vorliegen, lassen sich heute, wo wir „über postmoderne Lektüreerfahrung“ verfügen, als „ein eigenständiges Werk von staunenswerter gedanklicher wie künstlerischer Kühnheit“ lesen. Kurzum: Dostojewskijs Konzeption transzendiert den dann endgültige Text. Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die Möglichkeit, die zu rekonstruieren ist. Hier spricht Ingold, der spekulative Poetologe, dem wir die inzwischen klassische Monographie *Der Autor am Werk* (München 1992) verdanken. Allerdings ist ihm der neue Titel, *Ein grüner Junge*, „gewöhnungsbedürftig“. Ja, Ingold fragt sich, ob „ein »grüner Junge« eher als ein »Jüngling« oder ein »junger Mann« in der Lage ist, sein Erwachsenwerden auf vielen hundert Seiten so sprachgewaltig zu protokollieren und sein Erwachsenwerden so souverän zu analysieren, wie Dostojewskij es ihm abverlangt.“ Ganz abgesehen davon aber könne die Lektüre des Romans mit dieser neuen Übersetzung „endlich zur glanzvollen Premiere“ werden: mit der Einsicht nämlich, dass „vieles von dem“, was Dostojewskij hier „vorführt“, und auch die „Art und Weise, wie er es tut“, erst bei zeitgenössischen Erzählern wie Harold Brodkey und Thomas Pynchon eine adäquate Entsprechung“ finden. Mit dieser Überlegung beschließt Ingold seine Rezension.

Mit ihrer Neuübersetzung könnte Swetlana Geier dem zweitletzten Roman Dostojewskijs zweifellos eine neue Aktualität verschaffen. Worin besteht aber die Eigenart dieser Neuübersetzung? Zwei Hauptschwierig-

¹ Horst-Jürgen Gerigk: Versuch über Dostoevskijs „Jüngling“. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Romans. München: Fink 1965; Die Russen in Amerika. Dostojewskij, Tolstoj, Turgenjew und Tschechow in ihrer Bedeutung für die Literatur der USA. Hürtgenwald: Guido Pressler 1995. Darin: Psychologie des Jugendalters: Salingers „Fänger im Roggen“ und Dostojewskijs „Jüngling“: 405-419; Dostojewskij, der „vertrackte Russe“. Die Geschichte seiner Wirkung im deutschen Sprachraum vom Fin de siècle bis heute. Tübingen: Attempto 2000; „Der Jüngling“, in Dostojewskijs Romane. Interpretationen, hrsg. von Birgit Harreß. Stuttgart: Reclam 2005: 91-115. – Aus der fremdsprachigen Forschung seien genannt: Ingunn Lunde: „Ja gorazdo umnee napisannogo“: On Apophatic Strategies and Verbal Experiments in Dostoevskii's *A Raw Youth*. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 79 (2001), No.2: 264-289; V.A. Viktorovič (ed.): Roman F.M. Dostoevskogo „Podrostok“: vozmožnosti pročtenija. Kolomna: Kolomenskij gos. ped. institut 2003.

keiten waren zu bewältigen. Einmal, den „hysterischen Diskurs“ (Ingold) des Ich-Erzählers sprachlich nicht zu glätten. Dostojewskij hatte in einer Werkstattnotiz festgehalten, er wolle „die Ungeschicklichkeit im Erzählen“ (nelovkost' rasskaza) zum Ausdrucksmittel werden lassen. Zum anderen, die von diesem Erzähler in den Dialogen protokollierten unterschiedlichen Sprachwelten der anderen Personen adäquat rüberzubringen. Dostojewskij ist der Meister „merkmalhaltiger Rede“. Das heißt: sein poetisches Universum kennt nicht das „mot juste“ eines Flaubert gegenüber den dargestellten Gegenständen und Sachverhalten. Diese werden von Dostojewskij immer nur aus der Perspektive eines bestimmten Sprechers fixiert, an dessen Rede sich oft mehr verrät, als dem Sprecher lieb ist. Dies gilt im *Jüngling* vor allem für all das, was der Ich-Erzähler uns erzählt, indem er aufschreibt und dabei uneingestanden von Ehre und Scham bestimmt wird.

Wie in keinem anderen seiner Werke stellt Dostojewskij den Übersetzer seines zweitletzten Romans vor eine kaum befriedigend zu lösende Aufgabe. Der zwanzigjährige Ich-Erzähler schreibt seine Memoiren auf eine Weise, die bewusst ungekünstelt sein will und doch immer wieder automatisch in literarische Floskeln übergeht. Im Schreiben ungeübt, wenn auch mit Abitur, ist dieser Jüngling mit seinen Bekenntnissen gleichzeitig salopp und präntiös, dabei aber zutiefst ernst. Der Übersetzer hat also mit höchstem Geschick sprachliche Ungeschicklichkeit zu reproduzieren. Anton Tschechow hat in seinem Bühnenstück *Die Möwe* der Schauspielerin, die die Arkadina zu spielen hat, eine vergleichbare Aufgabe gestellt. Die Schauspielerin, die diese Rolle übernimmt, muss mit höchstem Können die schauspielerische Mediokrität der Arkadina zum Ausdruck bringen, die präntiert, eine große Schauspielerin zu sein, in Wahrheit aber nur das Theatralische zu ihrem Lebenselement macht. Wer diese Rolle spielt, muss also mit höchstem Können Nichtkönnen veranschaulichen. Um was es hier künstlerisch geht, hat auch Heinrich Heine verdeutlicht, wenn er einem unbegabten „Kollegen“, der die Hermannschlacht literarisch fixieren möchte, rät, die Sümpfe und Knüppelwege des Teutoburger Waldes doch durch wässrige und holprige Verse darzustellen, dann entspräche die Form dem Inhalt.

Dostojewskij hat mit den Aufzeichnungen seines zwanzigjährigen Ich-Erzählers das Kunststück vollbracht, sprachliche Unsicherheit als ein Pendeln zwischen Anspruch und Unvermögen zu einem perfekt

kontrollierten Ausdrucksmittel zu machen. Zum Ausdruck kommt die Hölle der Pubertät als Existenzform der Unreife. Wer dies nicht sieht, hat die Eigenart der von Dostojewskij gestalteten Sache nicht begriffen. Dieser Erzähler soll weder die sprachliche Bändigung des Erlebten leisten können, noch zu einer übersichtlichen Darbietung seiner Erlebnisse fähig sein. Da *podrostok* im Russischen auch „Unterholz“ bedeutet, könnte man sagen, dass Dostojewskij es auf die Selbstkennzeichnung der präsozialen Innerlichkeit seines Anti-Helden abgesehen hatte: auf seelisches Unterholz kurz vor der sozialisierenden Rodung.

Sehen wir uns den Anfang des Romans in drei verschiedenen deutschen Übersetzungen an. Zunächst Swetlana Geier:

Ich habe es doch nicht länger ausgehalten und habe mich nun hingesezt, um diese Geschichte meiner ersten Schritte auf dem Schauplatz des Lebens niederzuschreiben, wiewohl ich das eigentlich auch lassen könnte. Eines weiß ich bestimmt: Niemals werde ich mich noch einmal hinsetzen, um meine Autobiographie zu schreiben, und sollte ich auch hundert Jahre alt werden. Man muß schon allzu erbärmlich selbstverliebt sein, um über die eigene Person schreiben zu können, ohne sich zu schämen. Ich kann mich nur damit entschuldigen, daß ich nicht deshalb schreibe, weshalb alle schreiben, das heißt, nicht, um vom Leser gelobt zu werden. Wenn ich plötzlich darauf gekommen bin, Wort für Wort alles niederzuschreiben, was mir in diesem letzten Jahr widerfuhr, so bin ich darauf gekommen aus einem inneren Bedürfnis: So tief hat mich alles Geschehene betroffen. Ich schreibe nur die Ereignisse nieder und vermeide nach Möglichkeit alles Nebensächliche und vor allem – alles literarische schmückende Beiwerk; ein Literat schreibt dreißig Jahre lang und weiß zu guter Letzt überhaupt nicht mehr, weshalb er so viele Jahre geschrieben hat.

Als nächstes Korfiz Holm. Er nennt den Roman *Ein Werdender*. Thomas Mann las diese Übersetzung. Darüber sogleich mehr. Hier der Anfang:

Ich konnte nicht anders, und so setzte ich mich denn hin, um die Geschichte meiner ersten Schritte auf dem Felde dieses Lebens zu schreiben. Und doch hätte ich es wohl ebensogut lassen können... Eins weiß ich ganz genau: in meinem ganzen Leben setze ich mich nicht noch einmal hin und schreibe eine Selbstbiographie, und wenn ich hundert Jahre alt werde. Ein Mensch muß gar zu erbärmlich in sich selbst verliebt sein, um ohne Schamgefühl über sein eigenes Leben zu schreiben. Meine einzige Entschuldigung ist, dass ich beim Schreiben nicht den Zweck verfolgte, den

sonst alle dabei verfolgen: ich schreibe nicht, um mich von meinen Lesern bewundern zu lassen. Wenn ich mich entschlossen habe, alles Wort für Wort aufzuzeichnen, was mir seit dem verflossenen Jahr begegnet ist, so entspringt das einer inneren Notwendigkeit: so stark und tief haben mich alle diese Ereignisse berührt. Ich werde nur Tatsachen berichten und mir die größte Mühe geben, allen unnützen Ballast zu vermeiden und insbesondere alle literarischen Schönheiten. So ein Schriftsteller schreibt dreißig Jahre lang, und am Ende weiß er gar nicht, warum er all diese Jahre hindurch geschrieben hat.

Und schließlich E. K. Rahsin. Ihre Übersetzung unter dem Titel *Der Jüngling* ist die im deutschen Sprachraum am meisten verbreitete:

Nun habe ich doch nicht widerstehen können und mich hingesezt, um die Geschichte meiner ersten selbstständigen Schritte auf dem Schauplatz meines Lebens niederzuschreiben, obschon ich das eigentlich auch unterlassen könnte...Eins aber weiß ich schon jetzt gewiß: dass ich mich nie wieder nochmals hinsetzten werde, um meine ganze Lebensgeschichte zu schreiben, und sollte ich auch hundert Jahre alt werden. Da müsste man denn doch schon gar zu erbärmlich in die eigene Person verliebt sein, um ohne Scham vor sich selbst sein ganzes Leben aufzudecken! Was mich diesmal noch entschuldigt, ist ja nur, dass ich nicht aus dem Grunde schreibe, der alle anderen dazu bewegt, das heißt: ich schreibe nicht, um vom Leser bewundert zu werden. Wenn es mir dennoch auf einmal in den Sinn gekommen ist, wahrheitsgetreu alles aufzuzeichnen, was ich in diesem letzten Jahr erlebt habe, so ist das infolge eines inneren Klärungsbedürfnisses geschehen: so tief und nachhaltig hat mich all das Erlebte aufgewühlt. Ich will nur die Begebenheiten aufzeichnen und mir alle Mühe geben, Beiläufiges zu übergehen und namentlich die üblichen literarischen Schnörkel zu vermeiden. So ein Schriftsteller schreibt mitunter dreißig Jahre lang, zu guter Letzt aber weiß er selber nicht, wozu er so lange geschrieben hat.

Was fällt auf? Nur bei Swetlana Geier und E.K. Rahsin findet sich das Wörtchen „plötzlich“ bzw. die Wendung „auf einmal“ (russ. *vdrug*). Swetlana Geier aber hält sich als einzige an Dostojewskijs Verwendung des Semikolons. Ich hätte allerdings die beiden ersten Worte des Romans „Ne uterpev“ anders übersetzt. Nämlich: „Ich hielt es einfach nicht länger aus und...“ Die „literarischen Schönheiten“ (literaturnye krasoty) hätte man gern aus der Übersetzung von Korfiz Holm hinübertransportiert zu Swetlana Geier anstelle von: „alles literarisch schmückende Beiwerk“. Auch E.K. Rahsins „Schnörkel“ treffen nicht. Wohin man auch blickt: mal dies, mal

das. Eine systematische Würdigung der Leistung Swetlana Geiers wird die Übersetzungswissenschaft zu erbringen haben, und das mit Blick auf die grundlegende Monographie von Norbert Greiner *Übersetzung und Literaturwissenschaft* (Tübingen 2004). Dabei sollte insbesondere die von Heinrich Böll überarbeitete deutsche Übersetzung von Jerome D. Salingers *The Catcher in the Rye* unter dem Titel *Der Fänger im Roggen* mitberücksichtigt werden. Denn *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) ist die amerikanische Variante von Dostojewskijs *A Raw Youth* (so der Titel der Übersetzung von Constance Garnett) und gleichzeitig der meistgelesene Adoleszenzroman der amerikanischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die sprachliche und psychologische Wellenlänge, auf der gesendet wird, ist die gleiche wie bei Dostojewskij. Aber nicht nur das. Auch die ausschließlich assoziative Einbringung der Vorvergangenheit haben beide Romane gemein.

Nun ein weiterer Romananfang. Man würde ihn sofort erkennen, deshalb habe ich den Namen des genannten Helden durch N.N. in eckigen Klammern ersetzt:

Mit aller Bestimmtheit will ich versichern, daß es keineswegs aus dem Wunsche geschieht, meine Person in den Vordergrund zu schieben, wenn ich diese Mitteilungen über das Leben des verewigten [N.N.] dieser ersten und gewiß sehr vorläufigen Biographie des teuren, vom Schicksal so furchtbar heimgesuchten, erhobenen und gestürzten Mannes und genialen Musikers, einige Worte über mich selbst und meine Bewandnisse vorausschicke. Einzig die Annahme bestimmt mich dazu, dass der Leser – ich sage besser: der zukünftige Leser; denn für den Augenblick besteht ja noch nicht die geringste Aussicht, dass meine Schrift das Licht der Öffentlichkeit erblicken könnte, – es sei denn, dass sie durch ein Wunder unsere umdrohte Festung Europa zu verlassen und denen draußen einen Hauch von den Geheimnissen unserer Einsamkeit zu bringen vermöchte; – ich bitte wieder ansetzen zu dürfen: nur weil ich damit rechne, dass man wünschen wird, über das Wer und Was des Schreibenden beiläufig unterrichtet zu sein, schicke ich diesen Eröffnungen einige wenige Notizen über mein eigenes Individuum voraus, – nicht ohne die Gewärtigung freilich, gerade dadurch dem Leser Zweifel zu erwecken, ob er sich auch in den richtigen Händen befindet, will sagen: ob ich meiner ganzen Existenz nach der rechte Mann für eine Aufgabe bin, zu der vielleicht mehr das Herz als irgendwelche berechtigende Wesensverwandschaft mich zieht.

Natürlich hieß der Held Adrian Leverkühn und der Roman *Doktor Faustus*, erschienen 1947. Thomas Mann hat am 16. April 1952 seinem Tagebuch anvertraut,

Begann Dostojewskys *Werdejahre* wieder einmal zu lesen. Zeitbloms erste Seite merklich davon beeinflusst, was ich nicht wusste.²

Eine schaffenspsychologisch hochinteressante Feststellung. Thomas Mann sieht sich unterschwellig von Dostojewskijs Ich-Erzähler beeinflusst. Zwar ist Serenus Zeitblom kein Jüngling, doch ein von seiner Materie überforderter Biograf. Was ergibt sich daraus? Einmal, dass mancher Rezensent des *Grünen Jungen* dies offensichtlich nicht wusste. Zum anderen aber, dass Thomas Mann der geeignete Übersetzer des zweitletzten Romans unseres Meisters gewesen wäre. Allerdings, Thomas Mann konnte kein Russisch. Dennoch wäre ihm gewiss für seine Übersetzung ein zutreffender Titel eingefallen, ein Titel, wie *Buddenbrooks* oder *Tonio Kröger* – jenseits aller Wörterbücher, und Dostojewskijs zweitletzter Roman hieße jetzt *Arkadij Dolgorukij*.

Horst-Jürgen Gerigk

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Malcolm Jones: *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*. London: Anthem Press, 2005. 183 pp.

Jones' Studie wird wohl ebensoviel begeisterten Zuspruch finden – vor allem bei dem russischen Leser von heute! –, wie Kritik bei westlichen Dostojewskij Forschern, die eine poetologische Orientierung bevorzugen. Dabei macht es der Autor seinen Lesern nicht leicht. Haben sie sich aber durch die 154 engzeilig gedruckten Seiten, samt 254 Anmerkungen und Verweisen auf rund 250 Titel der „Ausgewählten Bibliographie“ durchgearbeitet, dann werden die einen meinen, da läge nun ein für die großen Romane gültiges Modell der Interpretation ihrer orthodox geprägten

² Vgl. Thomas Mann: Tagebücher 1951–1952. Hrsg. von Inge Jens. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer 1993; 259. Thomas Mann notiert zwar *Werdejahre* (die von Hermann Röhl übersetzt wurden), meint aber *Ein Werdender*, übersetzt von Korfiz Holm.

religiösen Tiefenstruktur vor, während die anderen sich fragen dürften, ob denn der große intellektuelle Aufwand überhaupt sinnvoll und gerechtfertigt sei und die Relevanz besitze, die ihnen der Autor zuweist. Alle Leser werden jedoch Jones für den umfassenden und in allen Verästelungen diskutierten Hintergrund zur Thematik der religiösen Erfahrung bei Dostojewskij und ihrer Bedeutung für seine großen Romane dankbar sein!

Nun weiß man, dass Dostojewskijs Verständnis der Orthodoxie vor allem im *Tagebuch eines Schriftstellers* in aller Deutlichkeit zum Ausdruck kommt. Wesentliche Aspekte der Orthodoxie in den Bereichen Liturgie, Dogma, Symbolik, Tradition, etc. sind für sein literarisches Schaffen jedoch eher irrelevant. Schließlich wusste er, dass er für ein möglichst breites Publikum schreiben *musste*, und daher blieb dies im Hintergrund! Im Russland von heute versucht man, den Literaten Dostojewskij mit sanfter Gewalt in ein orthodoxes Korsett zu zwängen, was weder den Texten noch ihrem Autor gerecht wird. Die poetische und literarische Qualität tritt tendenziell in den Hintergrund, der poetologische Zugang wird behindert, der Klassiker der Weltliteratur wird auf einen Verkünder einer christlich-orthodoxen Weltanschauung, bzw. Ideologie reduziert. Dass Jones diese Synthese des Schriftstellers mit dem nationalpatriotisch-orthodox eingestellten Ideologen und Journalisten teilt, wird aus folgendem Beispiel deutlich: Jones zitiert aus einem, wie er sagt „brilliant article“ von William Mills Todd III, fügt dann aber hinzu: „The only point at which I should want to take issue with Mills Todd is in the formulation of his introductory sentence, which reads, ‘However much his readers have taken him to be a prophet, philosopher, journalist and political thinker, Dostoevsky’s vocation was imaginative literature, the art of writing’.” Jones kommentiert: “This surely contains a false opposition.” Jones hat nur insofern Recht, als in letzter Analyse selbstverständlich der Schriftsteller und der Journalist ein und dieselbe Person waren. Er hat aber Unrecht, insofern sich der Schriftsteller weltanschaulich anders orientierte als der Journalist, schrieben doch beide für Leser mit unterschiedlichen Interessen. Der Journalist Dostojewskij verfolgte andere Ziele als der Schriftsteller Dostojewskij, was den entsprechenden Texten auch eine deutlich unterschiedliche Qualität verleiht. Diese Unterschiede werden in russischen Interpretationen heutzutage oft (mit Absicht?) verwischt. Jones’ Analyse fördert bedauerlicherweise diese Tendenz! Mills Todd stellt die Hierarchie der

Werte in Bezug auf den Schriftsteller klar, Jones sieht dies als eine ‚falsche Gegenüberstellung‘.

Wie definiert Jones die „religiöse Erfahrung“ des großen Klassikers? Er sieht in Dostojewskij „a genius wrestling with the problem of rethinking Christianity in the modern age.“ (S.23) Diese Formulierung kann man trotz ihrer etwas schwammigen Verallgemeinerung durchaus akzeptabel finden, aber dennoch ist sie nicht richtig. Dostojewskij hat sich zeitlebens intensiv mit Glaubensfragen beschäftigt, aber dies stets mit *seinem* Verständnis der Orthodoxie verbunden. „Modern age“ kann sich dabei nur auf seine Zeit, d.h. das 19. Jahrhundert beziehen. In diesem Jahrhundert wurzeln seine Gedanken, darauf beziehen sich seine Zweifel, wie auch Hoffnungen. Die Implikationen von Jones' Definition sind für den Leser von heute irreführend, denn sie suggeriert eine „Neufassung“ oder „Neu-Erfindung“ (= ‚rethinking‘!) des Christentums jenseits der drei großen Konfessionen, und zwar eine solche, die zudem dem „modernen Zeitalter“ (20/21. Jahrhundert?) angepasst ist! Auch dies leistet fragwürdigen Bestrebungen in Russland Vorschub, wovon bereits die Rede war.

Die ersten beiden Kapitel sind nützliche Übersichten, die den Boden für Jones' Interpretations-„Modell“ vorbereiten sollen. Im ersten Kapitel hat der Autor alles zusammengetragen, was in der Entwicklung Dostojewskijs von der Kindheit bis in die 1870er Jahre seine religiöse Erfahrung beeinflusst und bestimmt hat. Im zweiten Kapitel bietet er eine ausführlich kommentierte Übersicht über die „current debate“ zum Thema. Vor allem bezieht sich Jones auf den 2001 erschienenen Sammelband *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, herausgegeben von George Pattison und Diane Thompson, in dem Letztere zum Schluss kommt, dass „the Christian world-view permeates and shapes all Dostoevsky's post-Siberian works, from the large narrative structures of his redemptive plots, whether failed, realized or suspended, to single words charged with Christian significance.“ Es ist so nicht verwunderlich, dass die beiden Herausgeber die Schlussfolgerung ziehen, - “it is almost impossible *not* to read Dostoevsky religiously.“ Unter Bezugsname auf Avril Pyman („How Orthodox was Dostoevsky, the writer?“) und Vladimir Zacharov, der sich intensiv mit der Rolle des Mythos von Tod und Auferstehung aus orthodoxer Sicht („Simvolika christianskogo kalendarja v proizvedenijach Dostoevskogo“, u.ä.) befasst hat, geht Jones u.a. der Frage nach, wie Dostoevsky „religiös“ zu lesen sei, ohne einerseits die orthodoxen Elemente zu überbetonen, noch andererseits diese Aspekte zu

vernachlässigen: „Is there another way of reading Dostoevsky religiously?“ (S.28)

Im dritten Kapitel wird der Frage nachgegangen, wie weit der Mythos von Tod und Auferstehung in seiner orthodoxen Erscheinungsform Dostojevskijs Werke strukturiert. Die Schwäche der Argumentation liegt nicht zuletzt in der Allgemeinheit dieser Formulierung, denn schließlich lässt sich dieses Schema auf fast jede große Literatur anwenden. Weiters fällt auf, dass Jones eine suggestive, auf Metaphern bauende Sprache bevorzugt, die nicht unbedingt nachvollziehbare Zusammenhänge herstellt. So sucht er nach „*signs of the spirit working renewal*“, nennt diese im nächsten Satz „*shoots of a new faith*“ und endet im dritten Satz mit „*resurrection of Orthodoxy*“. (S.47) Wenn Jones von Nastasja Filippovna sagt, in ihr „the image of Christ preserved by Russian Orthodoxy continued to glow defiantly.“ (S.50), dann ist dies wiederum ein suggestiver Satz, dessen Wahrheitsgehalt kaum bestimmt werden kann. Es scheint dem Rezensenten auch nicht unbedingt legitim, Aussprüche einer Romanfigur dem Autor zuzuschreiben. So wird Myschkin ausführlich zum Wesen des religiösen Gefühls zitiert (S.50). Der Kontext legt nahe, dass Jones den Inhalt dieses Zitats als Ausdruck der religiösen Haltung Dostojevskijs versteht. Der „orthodoxe Charakter“ der großen Romane wird von Jones dann durch ausführliche Zitate aus den Publikationen Vladimir Zacharovs belegt, der sich seit seiner Bekehrung zur Orthodoxie und seiner Taufe vornehmlich mit den Evangeliumstexten in der russischen Literatur und besonders bei Dostojevskij befasst hat. Angesprochen werden Aspekte, wie das Symbol der untergehenden Sonne, die Idee der „sobornost“, die Kirchenfeste des orthodoxen Kalenders und die orthodoxe Tradition der „apophatic theology“ (= negative Theologie, vgl. V. Lossky. Jones S.71ff.). Um es kurz zu fassen, es geht Jones um den Gegensatz von rationaler und emotionaler (mystischer) Erkenntnis, der bei Dostojevskij bewusst gesetzt erscheint und in seinem Leben wurzelt. Dostojevskij hat sich Zeit seines Lebens vor allem mit zwei religiösen Problemen auseinandergesetzt, wie auch Jones feststellt. Das erste betraf die Macht, bzw. Ohnmacht der Vernunft und bezog sich auf die Existenz Gottes, die von der zeitgenössischen Wissenschaft und Geschichte eher verneint wurde und von der Vernunft nicht zu begründen ist, das andere war im Kern emotional und irrational und betraf die Person Christi, an den Dostojevskij als Ideal und Vorbild stets geglaubt hat, aber sich eingestehen musste, dass Christi Gebote die Menschen überforderten. Jones

argumentiert, dass Dostojewskij diese beiden Probleme in die Struktur seiner Romane einbezog und stets aufs Neue variierte. Das Schema nach dem dies geschah – so Jones im Gefolge von Zacharov – beruhe auf dem orthodoxen Verständnis von Tod und Auferstehung in der Osterliturgie: „The image of death and resurrection provides the underlying structuring principle for Dostoevsky’s mature fiction.“ (S.45) Es muss eingeräumt werden, dass sich Jones nichts desto weniger immer wieder gegen eine Überbewertung religiöser Elemente in den Texten verwehrt. So widerlegt er die Behauptung, dass das Johannes Evangelium eine herausragende Rolle bei Dostojewskij gespielt hätte. (S.57) Eine gewisse Widersprüchlichkeit ist dennoch nicht zu übersehen. So spricht Jones von „the overall structuring ‚Easter myth’ of death and renewal“, stellt aber umgehend fest, dass „explicit Orthodox dogma and Orthodox tradition“ bei Dostojewskij fehlen! Einige Seiten später wird der Leser allerdings mit einer wieder anders lautenden Aussage konfrontiert: „Culturally speaking, the Orthodox tradition plays a major, if not dominant role in Dostoevsky’s fictional world.“ (S.65) Die Grundfrage bleibt jedoch davon unberührt und lautet nach wie vor: „What solid grounds are there for claiming that the Dostoevskian novel is fertile ground for the resurrection [!] of Orthodoxy...“ (S.62)

Im vierten Kapitel geht es um den Konflikt zwischen Glauben/glauben wollen und Unglauben/nicht glauben können, - in Jones’ Terminologie, „deconstructive anxiety“ (?), bzw. die Schwellenangst vor dem Absturz ins Nichts, wenn die Vernunft versagt und das intuitive Erkennen des Göttlichen, d. h. das mystische Erlebnis, ausbleibt. Dies wird mit dem „apophatischen Prinzip“ erläutert. Es geht um Konflikte, die nach Jones bei Dostojewskij allerdings in „shoots of a new spiritual consciousness“ münden, „which may grow into Orthodoxy.“ (!) In dieser Diskussion spielt der von Mikhail Epstein entlehnte Begriff einer „minimal religion“ eine signifikante Rolle. Epstein hat 1982 in seinem gleichnamigen Aufsatz und wiederum 1999 in einem zweiten Aufsatz „Post-Atheism: From Apophatic Theology to ‚Minimal Religion““ die religiöse Situation in der postkommunistischen Gesellschaft Russlands mit diesen Begriffen zu charakterisieren versucht. Nach ihm führte die apophatische Tradition in der Orthodoxie zum russischen Nihilismus des 19. Jahrhunderts und weiter zum Atheismus der Sowjetunion. In den 1970er und 80er Jahren entstand daraus eine „post-atheistic religiosity“, die Epstein als „minimal religion“ beschreibt. (Jones, S.66ff.) Jones sieht in Dostojewskijs literarischen Schriften eine ähnliche

„minimalistische“ Religiosität. Allerdings bleibt die Verbindung mit der Orthodoxie unklar! („shoots... may grow into Orthodoxy“?)

Das fünfte Kapitel führt schließlich zum Höhepunkt der Studie, dem letzten Roman Dostojewskijs: *Die Brüder Karamasow*. Jones bietet dem Leser eine detaillierte Darstellung der religiösen Aspekte des Romans einschließlich einer Nacherzählung der „Legende“ (= Ivans „Poem“) vom Großinquisitor. Was Jones beweisen möchte, ist, was er „slippage“ nannte, das „Ableiten“ von einem fixen Standpunkt, verbunden mit einer Annäherung an den entgegen gesetzten Standpunkt, - einen „Beinahe-Übergang“ von einem zum anderen. (S.124) Obgleich Jones im Roman nur minimale Verweise auf wichtige Elemente der Orthodoxie, wie Ritual, Dogma, etc. findet, bezieht er die Orthodoxie „in its fullness“ (!) in seine Interpretation ein, denn sie sei, wie er sagt, „the window through which they [= die Gestalten des Romans] approach transcendent reality and whose theology has enabled them to formulate their own religious outlook on life.“ (S.139) Zwischen „minimal religion“ und „minimal atheism“, im Kontext einer „dröhnenden Stille“ (= deafening silence“, S.145) erkennt Jones die religiöse Grundstruktur – Orthodoxie „in its fullness“.

Es ist nicht leicht möglich, jenseits der schönen poetischen Metaphern, die Jones mit Vorliebe in seiner Studie verwendet, eine nachvollziehbare, rationale Definition des von ihm angepeilten Interpretationsmodells zu geben. Diesen Versuch möge jeder nach der Lektüre von Jones' Buch selbst unternehmen. Einige weitere Gedanken seien aber noch angefügt. Es verwundert schon, wenn Jones bestehende Interpretationen, die allgemein bekannt sein dürften, weder im Text, noch in der Bibliographie erwähnt. Ich verweise auf H.-J. Gerigks ingeniose, die gedankliche Grundstruktur der *Brüder Karamasow* bloßlegende Studie über den „inneren Gerichtshof“ im Menschen nach Kant (Nachwort zur dtv-Ausgabe des Romans 1978) oder die Interpretation der *Wirtin* des Rezensenten, in der die religiösen Aspekte, die von Jones im abschließenden sechsten Kapitel (S. 149) diskutiert werden, eine Rolle spielen (auch PSS, Bd.1, S.508). Ebenfalls wird die Figur des Fürsten Myschkin bei Jones etwas einseitig dargestellt. In der Literatur zum *Idiot* gibt es eine andere Lesart, die dem „perfectly beautiful man“, dem „saintly Myshkin“ (Jones, S.88) durchaus, und wie ich meine mit Recht, kritisch gegenüber steht, versagt doch Myschkin in seiner Beziehung zu Aglaja ebenso, wie zu Nastasja Filippovna, deren Tod in ursächlichem Zusammenhang mit dem Verhalten des Fürsten steht! Wie Fürst Sch. zu

Myschkin bemerkt: „Lieber Fürst, das Paradies auf Erden bekommt man so leicht nicht; und doch rechnen Sie mit irgendeinem Paradies; das Paradies ist eine schwere Sache, unendlich schwerer, als es Ihrem schönen Herzen erscheinen mag.“ Es ist nahe liegend, diese Worte als auktoriale Selbstkritik zu verstehen. Sie haben mit Dostojewskijs Religiosität sehr wohl zu tun. Jones geht darauf ebenso wenig ein, wie auf das schöne Bild, das nach der Ansicht des Rezensenten eine Schlüsselrolle im Roman spielt, aber überhaupt keine Erwähnung bei Jones findet. Die Rede ist von Wera Lebedew, die für Myschkin sorgt und auch nach Myschkins Rückfall in die „Idiotie“ am Ende des Romans mit ihm in Verbindung bleibt. Mehrere Male wird im Roman erwähnt, wie sie mit Lebedews jüngster Tochter Ljubow im Arm dasteht: „Wera“ (= dt. der Glaube) mit Ljubow (= die Liebe) im Arm! Der *Glaube*, der die *Liebe* trägt, erscheint so als potentieller Erlöser Myschkins.

Zusammenfassend sei festgehalten, dass Jones' Studie eine durchaus bemerkens- und lesenswerte Darstellung einer religiösen Lesart der großen Romane bringt, aber, wie versucht wurde zu zeigen, nicht unumstritten sein dürfte!

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OBITUARIES ◇ NACHRUFE

In Memory of Victor Terras 1921-2006

Fokus: Literaturgeschichte

Seit 1974 hat Victor Terras die Symposien der Internationalen Dostojewskij-Gesellschaft besucht - Das letzte Mal 2001 in Baden-Baden. Dort kam ich mit ihm wie eh und je ausgiebig ins Gespräch, und das in der entspannten Atmosphäre des Parkhotels Brenner vor dem großen Dinner, das ausgerechnet von der Deutschen Turgenjew-Gesellschaft finanziert wurde. Man hatte sogar dem nicht anwesenden Ehepaar Dostojewskij einen Tisch gedeckt. Dazwischen sind mir insbesondere unsere Begegnungen in Cerisy-la-Salle 1983 und in Oslo 1992 in lebhafter Erinnerung. In Cerisy feierten wir mit René Wellek dessen achtzigsten Geburtstag, und Oslo wartete mit Edvard Munchs Porträt der *Sanften* auf.

Speziell zu Dostojewskij seien von Victor Terras insbesondere drei seiner Publikationen hervorgehoben: *The Young Dostoevsky: 1846-1849* (1969), *A Karamazov Companion. Commentary on the Genesis, Language, and Style of Dostoevsky's Novel* (1981, 2. Aufl. 2002) und *Reading Dostoevsky* (1998) mit einem Appendix zur Frage „How Much Does Dostoevsky Lose in English Translation?“.

1985 erscheint das von ihm herausgegebene *Handbook of Russian Literature* und verschafft ihm internationales Ansehen. Sein Gespür für Lyrik führt zu einer Studie über *Vladimir Mayakovsky* (1983) und gipfelt in der Monographie *Poetry of the Silver Age: The Various Voices of Russian Modernism* (1998), zu der ich ein Vorwort verfaßte, das diesem Werk den klassischen Rang von Renato Poggiolis *The Poets of Russia, 1890-1930* (1960) zusprach und 1998 war es auch, dass Victor Terras uns mit seiner Frau in Heidelberg besuchen konnte. Wir verbrachten einen unvergeßlichen Abend in der Kurfürstenstube des Europäischen Hofes. Der Pianist im Hintergrund spielte Gershwin: „It Ain't Necessarily So“ und „Summertime“ - dezent und gekonnt. Victor und Rita Terras wohnten damals im Rancho Mirage, California, und schwärmten davon. Meine

Frau und ich sollten sie dort besuchen. Es wurde zwar unsererseits nichts daraus. Das Gespräch aber lebte von Plänen, auch was die Literaturwissenschaft und ihre derzeitige Situation anbelangte, denn wir waren ja vier Philologen am Tisch.

Als ein Meisterwerk der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung hat seine *History of Russian Literature* (1991) zu gelten. Mit seinem formgeschichtlichen Ansatz steht Victor Terras innerhalb der zeitgenössischen Literaturhistorie allein da. Gegliedert wird nach formgeschichtlichen Beziehungsfeldern. Formgeschichte allerdings aufgefaßt als frei von aller „formalistischen“ Dogmatik. Terras kann deshalb, je nach Bedarf, die Ideengeschichte, die Sozialgeschichte und die politische Geschichte in seinen Dienst stellen. In seinem Vorwort macht er zwei Prinzipien geltend, die ihn bei seinem Unternehmen geleitet haben. Seine Darstellung konzentriert sich auf die „hohe Literatur“, d. h. auf „Autoren und Werke, die von einer Bildungselite in ihrer Zeit und später geschätzt worden sind.“ Denn nur die „hohe Literatur“ sei für den „ausländischen Leser“ von primärem Interesse. Zum anderen (und aus demselben Grund) widmet seine Darstellung dem ästhetischen Gehalt der Literatur größere Aufmerksamkeit als dem „sozialen Wert“ und ihrer „geschichtlichen Bedeutung“ (S. viii). Wörtlich heißt es dann: „Ideen, Ideologien und Denkrichtungen werden nur insoweit berücksichtigt, wie sie einen unmittelbar zu beobachtenden Niederschlag in der Literatur gefunden haben. Es wird nicht versucht, unter die Oberfläche der literarischen Fakten, wie sie uns vorliegen, eine Tiefenstruktur oder Teleologie ausfindig zu machen.“

Das heißt vor allem: Victor Terras ist frei von Marxismus und Psychoanalyse. Sein literaturtheoretisches Nachdenken gilt der Möglichkeit einer sinnvollen „Literatur“-Geschichte. Seine programmatischen Überlegungen hierzu hat er in seinem Aufsatz „Diachrony and synchrony in writing Russian literary history“ zusammengefasst und zugespitzt (in: *Sign Systems Studies*, vol. 27, Tartu 1999, S. 272-291). Mit solcher Fragestellung wird Victor Terras insbesondere der jungen Generation von Literaturwissenschaftlern und Dostojewskij-Forschern, die nicht von den hermeneutischen Irrwegen des 20. Jahrhunderts geprägt wurden, ein hilfreiches Vermächtnis sein. Mit Victor Terras hat die Internationale Dostojewskij-Gesellschaft einen ihrer bedeutendsten Repräsentanten verloren.

A Memorial Minute for Professor Victor Terras
(21. I. 1921 — 17. XII. 2006)

Victor Terras, the Henry Ledyard Goddard University Professor and Professor Emeritus of Slavic Languages and Comparative Literature at Brown, certainly belonged to that special group of scholars "whose abilities and talents were of the highest order," as the description of his named chair suggests. He was indeed our profession's foremost cross-disciplinary specialist in the history of aesthetics and literary criticism, poetic theory, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian and Western literatures, and his many students are today's leading scholars in the profession worldwide.

Professor Terras' long and distinguished career began in his native Estonia, where he specialized in Romance and Classical Languages at Tartu University, and continued with a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages & Literatures from the University of Chicago. His academic interests ranged from the Classics through historical linguistics to the study of Germanic and Slavic cultures and Comparative Literature. Unlike many scholars, he did not abandon any of these fields as he developed new interests. He kept up with his many specialties, thanks to his ability to read with great speed and fluency. He was completely at home in Estonian, German, Russian, English, Polish, highly competent in Classical Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, could speak what he modestly chose to term "halting" French and Czech. In 1970 Roman Jakobson wrote on behalf of Victor Terras, just before he came to Brown: "Terras is a man of wide erudition, both in Russian and comparative literature; his studies on the greatest modern poets belong to the deepest and most refined essays which were written on Russian poetry in world criticism. I think he would be a magnificent addition to your department." And he was. By the time Professor Terras left Brown, he had authored dozens of monographs and over 200 influential publications on such writers as Vissarion Belinsky, Fyodor Dostoevsky, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Osip Mandelshtam, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vladimir Nabokov, Boris Pasternak, Alexis Rannit, and many others. He also became the world's leading expert on the nineteenth-century school of Organic Criticism; he was editor-in-chief of the heretofore unsurpassed and monumental *Handbook of Russian Literature*; the author of the magisterial *A History of Russian Literature*; and the seminal *Poetry of the Silver Age*.

A keynote speaker at a number of distinguished academic forums, he held high office in many national and international professional societies. He served as President of the *American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages*, and the *International Dostoevsky Society*, as bibliographer of the *MLA International Bibliography*, and as a member of the *Academic Council of the Kennan Institute*. He rendered distinguished service to Brown University on a number of important committees, in addition to chairing the Department of Slavic Languages between 1972-76. He regularly taught two or three courses a year beyond a professor's normal course load and was a much loved and highly respected teacher and colleague in our department. Having been forced to retire for reasons of health, Professor Terras nonetheless continued his active engagement with the profession and provided our department invaluable help as reader on a number of our dissertations. When he came—in spite of a debilitating physical condition—to help us in celebrating our 50th anniversary in 1997 with another profound lecture on "Russian Modernism" and selflessly agreed to serve on yet two more dissertations, we clearly understood that there were at least two more ways in which his persona reflected his named professorship: supreme generosity and supreme collegiality.

Victor Terras passed away last December in Washington, D.C. after complications from Parkinson's. His colleagues and former students remember him as a soft-spoken, modest man, an inexhaustible source of knowledge and support, and a reliable friend. He is survived by his wife, Professor Rita Terras, his son, Dr. Alex Terras, and his granddaughter, Kara.

Respectfully submitted
to the Office of Faculty Governance at the March 6, 2007
Faculty Meeting, Brown University, by *Alexander Levitsky*

CURRICULUM VITAE
(Abridged for years 1941-1986)
of Victor Terras

Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature
Brown University

Home address: 15 Taber Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02906, USA

Mag. Phil, University of Estonia, Tartu, 1941 (Magna cum Laude)

Candidate Phil., University of Estonia, Tartu, 1942 (Magna cum Laude)

Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1963

Dissertation topic: The Stylistic Craftsmanship of Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1845-1849.

Professional appointments:

1959-60, Instructor, University of Illinois, Department of Slavic Languages

1960-62, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois, Department of Slavic Languages

1962-64, Associate Professor, University of Illinois, Department of Slavic Languages

1964-66, Professor, University of Illinois, Department of Slavic Languages

1966- 70, Professor, University of Wisconsin, Department of Slavic Languages

1970 (summer), Ohio State University, Department of Slavic Languages

1970-1987, Professor, Brown University, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Research Interests:

Esthetic and literary theory; Slavic-German literary relations; modern Russian literature.

Invited lectures:

1981-1982

International Dostoevsky Symposium, Munich (Germany), October 1981.

University of Bonn (Germany), June 1982.

1984

Harvard University

NEMLA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia (keynote speaker)

Brown University Alumni Summer Seminar

Norwich University Russian Summer School

Estonian Learned Society in New York

AAASS meetings in New York (special section devoted to Roman Jakobson)

1985

Annual Meeting of the North American Dostoevsky Society Washington, D.C.

AAASS Meeting in Washington, D.C. (1985)

Harvard University, 1985

Columbia University, 1985

1986

International Dostoevsky Symposium in Nottingham (England) , 1986

International Convivium on Viacheslav Ivanov in Pavia (Italy), 1986

AAASS Meeting in New Orleans, 1986

Service to the University:

Department Chairman, 1972-76

Library Committee

University Press

EPC Subcommittee on Internship Experiences for Academic Credit, for the 1979-80 year.

IREX Representative for Brown University, since 1980.

Chairman of University Lectureships Committee, 1981-82.

Service to the Profession:

North American Dostoevsky Society

AATSBEL Journal Committee

Bibliographer of the MLA International Bibliography -until 1981.

President, AATSEEL 1980/81, 1981/82.

Member of the Academic Council of the Kennan Institute.

Acted as Chairman of the Christian Gauss Book Award

Committee of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

Academic Honors:

President, Dobro Slovo Honorary Society, 1978.

President, North American Dostoevsky Society, 1977.

NEH grant (\$50,000) to edit a *Handbook of Russian Literature* published, 1985. (Yale University Press).

Academic Honors continued:

Vice-President of the International Dostoevsky Society

(elected at the meeting of the Society in Cerisy-la-Salle (France) August, 1983.

Teaching:

1982-83

Russian 3,4 Intermediate Russian I & II

Russian 103, 101 Russian Civilization III & I

Comparative Literature 161: Studies in Criticism

Russian 181: Dostoevsky

Slavic 291, 292: Advanced Reading & Research

1983-84

Russian 3, Intermediate Russian I

Russian 102, Russian Civilization II

Comparative Literature 142B: Romantic Fiction

Russian 181: Tolstoy

Slavic 291: Advanced Reading & Research

Sabbatic Leave -Semester II, 1983-84

1984-85

Russian 103, Russian Civilization III

Comparative Literature 161, Studies in Criticism

Russian 182, Dostoevsky and the Russian Novel

Russian 205, Russian Poetry of the Twentieth Century

1985-86

Russian 101, Russian Civilization I

Russian 161, Hegelian & Marxist Aesthetics & Criticism

Russian 102, Russian Civilization II

Russian 277, Literary Theory 10.

1986-87

Russian 186 Chekhov

Russian 103 Russian Civilization III Russian

182 Dostoevsky

SL291 – Adv. R & R CO 142A Romantic Fiction

RU 198

Publications

(Approximately 150 book reviews not listed).

Books:

A. Pushkin, *Boris Godunov*. With introd., notes, and a vocab. by V. Terras. London: Bradda Books, 1965.

A. Pushkin, *Malen'kie dramy*. With introd., notes & a vocab. by V. Terras. London: Bradda Books, 1966.

The Young Dostoevsky: A Critical Study: The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1969.

F. Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for The Possessed* Ed. by Edward Wasiolek. Tr. by Victor Terras. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

F. Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for the Raw Youth*. Ed. by Edward Wasiolek. Tr. by Victor Terras. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

F. Dostoevsky, *The Gambler*. With Polina Suslova's Diary. Tr. by Victor Terras. Ed. by Edward Wasiolek. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.

American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists. August, 1973, Warsaw. Ed. by Victor Terras. The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1974.

Aleksis Rannit: Luhimonograafia. Lund: Eesti kirjanike kooperatiiv, 1975.

American Contributions to the Eighth International Congress of Slavists Zagreb and Ljubljana. September 3-9, 1978. Vol.2 Literature. Ed. by Victor Terras. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1978.

A Karamazov Companion. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.

Vladimir Mayakovsky. (Twayne's World Authors Series, 706.) . Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983.

F. M. Dostoevsky: Life. Work. and Criticism. Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1983.

A Handbook of Russian Literature. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985. (Editor }

Articles:

"Zur Geschichte des slavischen v," *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, 19(1946): 120-123.

"Slavische Etymologien," *ZSIP* 19 (1946): 118-120.

Bemerkungen zum Stil Leo Tolstois," *Scholar* (1947): 65-70.

"Praposition und Verbalprafix po im Slavischen," *ZSIP* 29: 302-314.

"Aspect and Tense in Russian," *The Slavic and East European Journal*. 4(1960): 331- 344.

"Two Bronze Monarchs," *Scandinavian Studies*, 33: 150-154.

"Russisch paren' und par ," *ZSIP* 30: 71- 74.

"The Travesty of Aeschines in Demosthenes' *De Corona*." *Kentucky Foreign Lang. Quarterly*. 10; 3: 170-7

"Russischkurse für Doktoranden an der University of Illinois in Urbana," *Zeitschrift für den Russisch-Unterricht*. 11/2: 109-115.

"Problems of Human Existence in the Works of the Young Dostoevsky," *Slavic Review*. 23: 79-91.

"L. M. Leonov's Novel *The Russian Forest*." *SEEJ* 3: 123-140.

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"'Shinel' Gogolya v kritike mladogo Dostoevskogo," *Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars*. Vol. 17, pp. 75-81.

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"Vyacheslav Ivanov's Esthetic Thought: Context and Antecedents," in *Vyacheslav Ivanov: Poet, Critic and Philosopher*, ed. R. L. Jackson and L. Nelson, Jr. (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1986), pp. 326-345.

NEWS OF THE PROFESSION ◇ MITTEILUNGEN

Dostojewskijs Roman *Ein grüner Junge* erhält den Preis der Leipziger Buchmesse 2007

Übersetzer stehen meist im Schatten des von ihnen übersetzten Autors. In diesem Fall ist es umgekehrt. Dostojewskij steht zur Zeit, was den deutschen Sprachraum anbelangt, im Schatten Swetlana Geiers. Und das ist gut so. Denn der Scheinwerfer, der sich auf seine neueste interviewfreudige Übersetzerin richtet, ist ja die schönste Werbung für den Meister aus Rußland. Konkret gesagt: Swetlana Geier hat den „Preis der Leipziger Buchmesse 2007“ für ihre Übersetzung des *Podrostok* bekommen. Fünfzehntausend Euro. Getreu ihrer Suche nach ungeläufigen Titeln, hat sie dafür gesorgt, dass *Der Jüngling* nun *Ein grüner Junge* heißt, nachdem sie bereits *Verbrechen und Strafe* (1994 – in Nachfolge von Alexander Eliasberg) an die Stelle von *Schuld und Sühne* gesetzt hatte und *Böse Geister* (1998) an die Stelle der *Dämonen*. Swetlana Geiers jüngster Triumph wurde sowohl von der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ (24./25. März 2007) als auch von der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ (26. März 2007) – und nicht nur von ihnen – begeistert kommentiert: als Krönung einer fünfzehn Jahre langen Klausurarbeit im Dienste Dostojewskijs.

Nun ist die Sache geschafft: alle fünf großen Romane Dostojewskijs liegen in neuer Übersetzung vor bei Egon Ammann, Zürich. Swetlana Geier (geb. 1923) zögert nicht mit grundsätzlichen Feststellungen: „Wenn man Dostojewskijs alle zwanzig Jahre liest, hat er sich jedes Mal entwickelt. Er ist neu.“ Übersetzen müsse man einen solchen Autor wie Dostojewskij alle zwanzig Jahre wieder. Übersetzungen altern, Literatur nicht. Das gibt Helmut Böttiger in der „Süddeutschen“ zu Protokoll. Und so liegt das Bild vom Übersetzen als „Frühjahrsputz“ nahe, das Richard Kämmerlings in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen“ ausbreitet, wenn er, von Enthusiasmus überwältigt, über Swetlana Geiers Übersetzungsleistung insgesamt vermerkt: „Die Entstaubung und Renovierung eines

literarischen Kosmos wurde da unternommen, ein Frühjahrsputz im Universum.“ Kritik und Verlagswerbung werden eins!

Den Dostojewskij-Kenner aber wird es freuen, dass ausgerechnet der zweitletzte Roman der großen fünf zu solchen Elogen animiert. Im deutschen Sprachraum war dieser Roman das letzte Mal im Jahre 1960 zu einer vergleichbaren Ehre gekommen, als *Der Jüngling* (in der Übersetzung E. K. Rahsins) als sechster Band der prominenten „exempla classica“ des S. Fischer Verlags vorlag, einer Buchreihe, die von Arthur Henkel, Uvo Hölscher, Golo Mann, Walter Pabst und Helmut Viebrock herausgegeben wurde. Es fehlt nun nur noch, dass dieser erzähltechnisch modernste aller Romane Dostojewskijs von David Lynch verfilmt würde – nach allen Regeln melodramatischer Hollywood-Manier, um ihm weltweit die zuständige Zielgruppe zu verschaffen. Zunächst aber hat Swetlana Geier der Zunft der Übersetzer einen Sieg errungen, der junge deutsche Leser gewinnen wird: für einen russischen Adoleszenz-Roman.



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Lexikon deutschsprachiger Epik und Dramatik von Autorinnen

(1730–1900)

2006, XII, 492 Seiten + CD-ROM, geb.

€ 128,00/SFR 203,00

ISBN 13: 978-3-7720-8189-7

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Die Auswahl der behandelten Werke konzentriert sich gattungsspezifisch auf Dramen und Prosa und zeitlich auf die modernisierungsgeschichtlich zentrale Phase von der Frühaufklärung bis zum Fin de siècle. Die einzelnen Autorinnen sind mit möglichst unterschiedlichen Genres und Stoffen vertreten, bevorzugt mit Titeln, die an gender-, kultur- und literarhistorischen »Meisterdiskursen« und Schlüsselfeldern teilhaben.

Der Artikelaufbau ist dreiteilig: nach einer informationsdichten Inhaltsangabe und Formbeschreibung folgt eine Einordnung in den gattungs-, diskurs- und soziohistorischen Kontext, abschließend eine knappe Bibliographie zu Werkausgaben und Sekundärliteratur.

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Christoph Bode

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Eine Einführung

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€ [D] 18,90/SFR 33,40

ISBN 978-3-8252-2580-3

Der Band bietet eine anspruchsvolle, doch lebendig und verständlich geschriebene Einführung in die Romananalyse und ist für Studierende aller neuphilologischen Literaturwissenschaften konzipiert. Die Einführung in narratologische Terminologie und Methoden wird mit grundlegenden literaturtheoretischen Überlegungen verknüpft und mit einer Fülle anschaulicher Beispiele illustriert. Besonderer Wert wird auf die Vermittlung der Einsicht gelegt, dass die analytische Zergliederung eines Romanes kein Selbstzweck ist, sondern das Verständnis seines »Funktionierens« erheblich vertieft, wenn nicht erst ermöglicht. Eine Leitidee ist dabei, dass - unabhängig vom jeweiligen »Inhalt« eines Romans - das Problem der Konstruktion fiktionaler Wirklichkeiten in dieser dynamischsten, formen- und erfolgreichsten literarischen Gattung der Neuzeit auch stets mitthematisiert wird: ein romanspezifisches Faszinosum.

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A. Francke

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